A report on

Penrhys Primary School
Heol Pendyrus
Penrhys
Ferndale
RCT
CF43 3PL

Date of inspection: October 2017

by

Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

About Penrhys Primary School

Penrhys Primary School is in the Rhondda Fach, in Rhondda Cynon Taff, a designated Communities First area. There are 109 pupils on roll, aged from three to eleven, including five full-time nursery pupils. The school has four mixed-age classes and four learning resource bases for 28 pupils who have complex learning needs. The pupils in these four classes come from a wide area across the local authority.

English is the predominant language for nearly all pupils. A very few pupils learn English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh at home. Approximately 70% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is much higher than the average for Wales. The local authority looks after a very few pupils.

The school identifies that around 68% of pupils have additional learning needs. This is significantly higher than the national average of 25%. Around 12% of these pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

The present headteacher took up her post in April 2014. The school's last inspection was in May 2011.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en

Summary

In Penrhys Primary School, most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Nearly all pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They are polite, have good manners and show respect for adults and for one another. Many make suitable progress from their starting points, and achieve at least expected standards by the time they leave the school. However, the school's track record in improving pupil outcomes is inconsistent over time. Their speaking, listening and reading skills are often strong, but pupils in key stage 2 do not transfer their writing, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills well enough in other subjects, across the curriculum. There are strengths, but too many weaknesses in pupils' learning in Welsh. The quality of teaching in many classes is improving. However, in a few classes, variations in the quality of teaching continue to limit pupils' learning and progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Pupils receive good care, support and guidance. The headteacher's strong and purposeful leadership sets a clear strategic direction for developing the school. She has managed change successfully in a few areas, but, in other areas, change is at an early stage of development.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	**Adequate and needs improvement**
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	**Good**
Teaching and learning experiences	**Adequate and needs improvement**
Care, support and guidance	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Adequate and needs improvement**

Recommendations

R1 Develop pupils' ability to apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum, particularly in key stage 2

R2 Improve pupils' Welsh oracy skills

R3 Ensure that teaching in all classes challenges pupils of all abilities to become independent learners

R4 Develop the contribution of staff, parents and pupils to self-evaluation and school improvement

R5 Improve communication with parents

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Many pupils enter the school with knowledge, understanding and skills below those expected for their age. Over time, many make suitable progress and, by Year 6, achieve at least expected standards from their starting points. This includes pupils with additional learning needs in mainstream classes and those in the learning support classes, who achieve well in relation to their personal targets. However, the school's track record in improving pupil outcomes is inconsistent over time.

Although a majority of pupils do not communicate well when they start school, their ability to listen, understand and speak improves quickly. By Year 2, most listen well and many converse with their peers and adults confidently. As pupils move through the school, they continue to build on their speaking and listening skills. They are attentive to their teachers and listen carefully to one another when working in pairs and small groups. By Year 6, more able pupils are articulate and speak confidently with adults, for example when discussing whether 'Willy Wonka's' factory should be shut down.

Pupils in the foundation phase develop their reading skills effectively. By Year 2, most make effective use of their knowledge of letter sounds to read unfamiliar words. More able pupils read fluently with expression and discuss their books enthusiastically. In key stage 2, as pupils' experiences widen and they develop a more extensive vocabulary, their reading fluency, expression and understanding of texts improve. By Year 6, most pupils read well using a range of suitable strategies. More able pupils make well-informed decisions about the type of stories or authors they like. Most pupils use their literacy skills well to research topics on the internet, for example when creating a file of facts about different countries.

Many pupils approach early writing well in the nursery and reception class. Many pupils move well from emergent writing to more extended writing as they move through the foundation phase. By Year 2, most pupils write an increasing range of sentences effectively, for example when writing an extended story about a 'Very Hungry Unicorn'. Pupils' writing skills strengthen gradually as they move through key stage 2. Many gain confidence across a suitable range of types of writing, and express their feelings and opinions sensitively, for example when discussing their work on fair trade. However, generally pupils in key stage 2 do not transfer their literacy skills well enough in other subjects, or make sufficient progress in developing their extended writing skills across the curriculum. This limits the progress that they make.

Most pupils develop their numeracy skills effectively as they move through the school. By Year 2, most pupils develop a sound knowledge of basic number facts and use these well to tackle simple problems successfully. Most enjoy mathematical games and they apply their skills correctly, for example to draw and interpret bar charts of their favourite fruit. In key stage 2, most pupils show a good understanding of an appropriate range of mathematical concepts and they use the correct mathematical vocabulary when talking about their work. By Year 6, many are confident in using a wide range of methods to calculate in their heads and on paper

to solve problems. They handle and analyse data confidently to create graphs, for instance when comparing prices in different supermarkets. However, in the foundation phase and key stage 2, most pupils apply only a limited range of numeracy skills appropriately across other areas of the curriculum.

Many pupils develop appropriate skills in ICT. By Year 2, many pupils use a good range of applications on tablet computers to support their learning. In key stage 2, most pupils use word processing and desktop publishing programmes effectively to communicate and share information with one another, for example when learning about different types of renewable energy. They have a sound knowledge of e-safety and use the internet safely and effectively to search for information. However, pupils' ability to use databases and spreadsheets to collect, store and manipulate data is limited.

Most pupils have a positive attitude to learning Welsh and, by Year 2, many pupils recall basic vocabulary, for example in relation to their topic on food. However, few have the skills to create simple sentence patterns effectively. Most pupils in key stage 2 respond appropriately to simple questions and more able pupils are beginning to form their own questions to ask others. By Year 6, many read simple texts using appropriate pronunciation and expression. Many use a suitable range of vocabulary and sentence patterns well, for example when writing about themselves. However, too few pupils have enough knowledge of Welsh language patterns or a wide enough vocabulary to enable them to communicate confidently in different situations.

Many pupils in the learning resource classes make good progress towards their personal targets. Nearly all develop suitable oracy skills and contribute enthusiastically to class discussions. They recall prior learning well, for example when talking about Italian food. They use a limited range of numeracy skills correctly, for example when using money to buy fruit and vegetables. Older pupils use the internet safely, for instance to search for a specific website about food.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and well mannered, always greeting people and holding doors open for others. They show respect for adults and for one another, listening carefully to what their friends and teachers say and responding to their ideas with consideration. Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school and are confident when in the school's environment. They feel safe and know what to do if they are worried or anxious. They respond well to adult guidance and support. Many pupils take their responsibility as playground buddies conscientiously. This is evident in the way nearly all pupils show respect, care and concern for each other.

Most pupils, including those in the learning support classes, have positive attitudes to learning and engage fully in lessons. They settle in lessons quickly and move between tasks sensibly and efficiently. Most pupils interact well in pairs and small groups. Many sustain concentration for appropriate periods and persevere when they find work hard. Most present their work neatly and attractively and speak enthusiastically about their school and the satisfaction they gain from their learning. A good example of this is the way in which they have used quick response codes to

create a digital trail around the school to share their work with visitors. Older pupils are increasingly involved in assessing their own learning. This helps them to understand what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils in the foundation phase make choices about how they learn and play a key role in deciding the activities they undertake. For example, after completing an activity, Year 2 pupils put the corresponding coloured lollipop stick in their individual pouches so that staff can see which challenges they completed. However, in key stage 2, pupils' independent skills are rather limited. They tend to rely too much on adults to direct them in their learning.

Nearly all pupils know how to keep healthy and safe. For example, foundation phase pupils' recent visit to the local golf club helps them to understand the importance of healthy meals. Nearly all pupils take part regularly in a good range of physical activities. Most pupils have a beneficial understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. Older pupils speak well about the need to protect their identity on line and of taking care about whom they contact.

Attendance rates are improving over time, but the school remains in the lower 50% when compared with similar schools. There is little difference in the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals and that of other pupils. Over the last four years, persistent absence shows a marked declining trend. Most pupils arrive at school on time.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

The school provides a wide range of valuable learning experiences that engage and motivate many pupils to succeed. Provision in the foundation phase, inside and outside the classroom, is stimulating and fosters independent learning effectively. Recent improvements in planning are helping to ensure that the curriculum builds more systematically on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills, as they move through the school. Teachers are increasingly planning more collaboratively and curriculum mapping is improving. As a result, planned provision for the development of pupils' oracy and writing skills is leading to improved opportunities for pupils to write in a broader range of genres. However, generally, teachers in key stage 2 do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in a broad enough range of tasks across the curriculum.

Staff in the learning support classes adapt their plans to meet the interests of pupils well, for example when studying the whole school topic on food. As a result, most pupils are keen to learn and make good progress in relation to their individual starting points.

The quality of teaching is adequate and requires improvement. There are very good working relationships in most classes and these support pupils' learning effectively. Support staff work alongside teachers skilfully and engage with pupils purposefully. In many classes, where the quality of teaching is most effective, teachers have up-to-date knowledge and prepare interesting activities that build well on pupils' previous learning. Teachers match tasks appropriately to pupils' different abilities and ensure that most pupils are motivated and challenged. They share clear learning objectives and most pupils understand what they need to do to be successful. Teachers ensure that lessons proceed at a good pace and use

questioning well to develop pupils' understanding. However, in a few classes, where teaching is less effective, teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations for pupil achievement. They do not adapt the work to meet pupils' needs well enough and this means a lack of challenge for pupils, especially those who are more able. As a result, these pupils receive too few opportunities to develop their independent learning skills and achieve to their full potential.

A wide range of extra-curricular activities and visits, for example the recent visit to a chocolate factory, enrich the curriculum and enhance the school's provision. The school provides a beneficial range of activities that promote Welsh history, culture using the local environment well, for example through the study of the area's coal mining heritage. Opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills in lessons are appropriate. However, the school does not ensure that pupils practise the Welsh they learn often enough in informal situations around the school. This limits the progress that pupils make.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has effective arrangements to support pupils' wellbeing. It is a caring community that nurtures pupils' personal and social skills effectively. Teachers and support staff know their pupils well and many respond sensitively to the needs and interests of individuals. Topic work, visits and daily collective worship provide valuable opportunities to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. The emphasis on positive values contributes well to the caring ethos and strong supportive atmosphere within the school. As a result, pupils feel safe, secure and well cared for.

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively. Pupils are very positive about the recently adopted strategies to improve behaviour. They understand the points system and what it means for them. The way most pupils demonstrate very good behaviour in class and around the school and have positive attitudes to their work exemplifies this. Leaders have improved strategies for promoting attendance and these are now more robust. Pupils are aware of the value of attending school regularly and of arriving on time. These strategies have led to a steady rise in attendance levels over the past four years and a reduction of persistent absence. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The school makes appropriate arrangements to support healthy eating and drinking and provides regular opportunities for pupils to participate in a range of fitness related activities. For example, foundation phase pupils take part in the daily teeth clean to raise their awareness of the importance of dental hygiene and recently enjoyed preparing and eating a healthy snack with their parents.

In the main, the school's processes for tracking pupil progress, identifying needs and providing support are robust. Leaders use this information well to identify pupils who require additional help at an early stage and provide appropriate support to meet their needs. Generally, individual education plans contain detailed, practical targets, and intervention strategies provide effective support for these pupils. Teachers and support staff review pupils' progress at regular intervals. However, arrangements to involve parents in reviewing their child's progress are not effective.

Pupils in the learning resource classes take part in school events and activities such as assemblies and visits. This has a beneficial impact on their wellbeing as well as their social and communication skills. However, few pupils have the opportunity to engage in learning activities with their peers in mainstream classes.

Teachers provide pupils with increasing opportunities to lead their learning in the classroom. Teachers in the foundation phase provide pupils with worthwhile opportunities to make choices about what and how they learn. Recently, during transition day activities with their new teacher, pupils in key stage 2 responded well in making decisions about what they would like to learn in their new topic about food. The school provides pupils with appropriate opportunities to be active in the local community, for example through litter picking. Pupils' opportunities to contribute to the organisation of the school, for example through the school council, are less well developed.

Parents receive regular information about many aspects of school life. This includes quality newsletters and text messages. However, current links are not always effective enough in engaging and informing all parents. Recently, teachers in the foundation phase have introduced an innovative ICT application, which enables pupils to share their activities with their parents. Parents appreciate this contact, which helps them to understand what their children are doing in school, and take a more active role in their children's learning. Recent parent workshops have had a positive impact in helping the few families who attended to engage in purposeful activities at home, with their children, for example in creating healthy meals.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher's strong and purposeful leadership sets a clear strategic direction for developing the school. She is committed to raising standards and providing stimulating experiences for all pupils. The deputy head carries out her responsibilities conscientiously and supports the headteacher effectively, for example by spearheading the successful introduction of the school's new behaviour policy, which is having a good effect on improving pupil attitudes and behaviour. Together, these leaders have high expectations, which they share successfully with the school community. All teachers now have clear and well-understood roles and responsibilities. This is beginning to develop shared leadership roles among staff at appropriate levels and helps to ensure that staff better understand their role in supporting school improvement. Teachers are working in teams more collaboratively and they plan better to meet the needs of pupils. However, this process is at an early stage of development and has yet to impact fully on teaching and learning.

The headteacher has established appropriate systems to evaluate the school's performance. Senior leaders use performance data, lesson observations and work scrutiny well to inform strengths and improvement priorities. The self-evaluation report is informative and gives an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Although self-evaluation is now more effective, it has yet to result in significant improvements. Staff, parents and pupils are not involved fully in the process. Priorities in the school improvement plan are appropriate and derive directly from the evidence gathered during the self-evaluation process. There are detailed targets for nearly all indicators, and responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness are clear.

Performance management arrangements encourage the appropriate professional development of teachers and support staff. This leads to a wide range of valuable opportunities for staff to improve their skills and to share good practice with other schools. As a result, teachers have an improved understanding of good and excellent teaching. This is beginning to improve the quality of teaching in many classes. However, in a few classes, variations in the quality of teaching continue to limit pupils' learning and progress in literacy and numeracy.

Members of the governing body are enthusiastic in their support of the school. They meet regularly and work diligently to improve their strategic role. They are eager to attend all training opportunities. Regular visits ensure that they have a good understanding about all aspects of school life. This enables them to provide teachers with effective levels of support and challenge, for example about the need to secure further improvements in standards of literacy and numeracy.

The headteacher and governors monitor expenditure carefully in order to ensure effective use of financial resources. The school manages its resources well. The recent purchase of the canopy in the foundation phase outdoor area is a valuable addition as is the creation of the 'Rainbow wellbeing room'. Arrangements to use the pupil development grant to improve outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals focus appropriately on meeting their needs. As a result, most targeted pupils make good progress.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales