



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Pencaerau Primary School
Cyntwell Avenue
Caerau
CF5 5QN**

Date of inspection: July 2019

by

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

About Pencaerau Primary School

Pencaerau Primary School is on the western outskirts of Cardiff. There are currently 273 pupils aged 3 to 11 on roll, including 60 pupils who attend the nursery. There are nine single age classes, including two in the nursery.

The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is around 40%. This is significantly above the national average of 18%. The school identifies approximately 18% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is below the national average of 21%. Around 78% of pupils come from a white British ethnic background and the remainder come from a range of ethnic minority groups. Nearly 9% of pupils are learning English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh at home.

The headteacher took up her post in September 2010. The last inspection was in June 2015.

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

The school's excellent, sustained practice in its care, support and guidance of pupils results in high levels of wellbeing and positive attitudes to school and to learning. Nearly all pupils have a strong sense of pride and belonging to the school community. This, in addition to the school's very effective partnership with parents, lays a secure foundation on which pupils thrive and learn. As a result, nearly all pupils make good progress from their starting points as they move through the school and achieve expected outcomes, or better, by the end of key stage 2.

Pupils in the nursery and reception classes enjoy a rich range of imaginative learning experiences that give them an exciting start to their education. As they move through the school, pupils continue to benefit from a varied and relevant curriculum, which engages them successfully in their learning.

The headteacher provides very strong and effective leadership, ably assisted by two senior teachers. She has established a clear vision for the school, shared by all members of staff, that prioritises pupils' wellbeing and encourages them to aspire to achieve their best.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Excellent
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Excellent
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards in pupils' Welsh language skills
- R2 Improve opportunities for pupils to use the full range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills across all areas of learning
- R3 Improve the quality of teachers' written feedback to pupils to help them make further progress
- R4 Ensure that self-evaluation processes identify areas for improvement accurately

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to its sustained excellent performance in the care, support and guidance of pupils, which results in high levels of wellbeing, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Nearly all pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve expected, or better, standards by the end of key stage 2. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress towards their individual targets.

Many pupils lack confidence in speaking when they enter the nursery, but over time they become increasingly happy to converse with visitors and one another. During key stage 2, most pupils share ideas productively. By Year 6, many pupils engage in mature, thoughtful discussions, for example about their experiences in primary school.

Throughout the school, pupils' listening skills are excellent. For example, from youngest to oldest, pupils listen and focus exceptionally well during whole school assemblies. In class, nearly all pupils listen attentively to their teachers.

With adult support, many pupils in the reception class use simple Welsh words, for example to count the number of shells in the sand tray. By Year 2, the majority of pupils respond confidently to simple greetings and instructions in Welsh. As they move through the school, however, most pupils' confidence and progress in using Welsh are limited.

Most pupils make good progress in their reading skills. In the foundation phase, they enjoy listening to stories and looking at books. By Year 2, pupils of all abilities show a sound understanding of the text and recall details of a story well. They use a good range of strategies to read unfamiliar words, including their knowledge of letters and sounds and their ability to think about the overall meaning of the text.

During key stage 2, pupils become familiar with a range of authors. They appreciate authors' use of imaginative vocabulary, such as invented words like 'hornswoggler'. In Year 4, most pupils use a dictionary or thesaurus effectively to check the meaning of words and to enrich the vocabulary they use in their own writing. By Year 6, many pupils' inferential skills are developing well, for example in relation to characters' feelings in the novel *Carrie's War*.

The youngest pupils make good progress in forming individual letters and words clearly. In reception, many pupils write simple sentences about sea creatures and apply their writing skills well in the 'ice cream parlour'. By Year 2, most pupils' handwriting is neat and well spaced. They write for a good variety of purposes, such as letters from Goldilocks to the three bears and recipes for a perfect pancake. More able pupils write at considerable length, maintaining the narrative thread in their stories.

During key stage 2, pupils write in a wide range of genres. Most pupils in lower key stage 2 use different literary techniques, such as alliterative adjectives and nouns, effectively to enliven their writing. However, they do not often write at length and the standard of their handwriting varies too much. In upper key stage 2, most pupils use their knowledge of elements of narrative structure, such as opening, climax and

resolution, effectively in their story writing. By Year 6, most pupils write effectively in Welsh, using familiar vocabulary and sentence patterns.

Throughout the school, most pupils make good progress in mathematics and apply their numeracy skills effectively in practical situations across the curriculum. However, pupils do not record their investigations in written form often enough when using their numeracy skills.

In the foundation phase, most pupils use their numeracy skills successfully to search for mini-beasts and create a picture bar chart. By Year 2, they have a sound grasp of number facts. They apply this knowledge well, for instance, to divide the lighthouse keeper's sandwiches into halves and quarters.

During key stage 2, most pupils develop a secure understanding of number. By Year 6, most pupils use a wide range of methods confidently to solve problems. For example, they choose appropriate strategies to find percentages of amounts of money.

Throughout the school, most pupils develop a good range of ICT skills for communication purposes. In the foundation phase, they use ICT competently to record their work using word processing skills, for example to answer questions about pirates.

In key stage 2, most pupils use ICT confidently to research information about their aspirations and create presentations of what they would like to be when they grow up. By Year 6, many pupils use spreadsheets well to present information about the growth of mould in a science lesson. Across the school, however, most pupils lack confidence in using their ICT skills for modelling and data handling because they have few opportunities to do so.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Almost without exception, pupils enjoy coming to school and show very high levels of care and concern for each other. They talk about their school with great pride and enthusiasm. Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and are happy to approach an adult if they are worried or upset about something. During key stage 2, most pupils develop a good understanding of how to stay safe when working online. They are aware, for example, of the need to keep their passwords private to protect themselves.

Pupils make positive contributions to the school's provision for their wellbeing. For example, pupils suggested having a 'calm zone' in the playground, in addition to the 'calm room' in school, to enable them to find a peaceful area when they need quiet time to themselves at break times. In the 'calm room', two pupils at a time sit in special chairs with a pupil mediator and take turns to listen or speak about any issue that is upsetting them. Through such experiences, nearly all pupils form very positive relationships with one another based upon trust and mutual respect.

The behaviour of nearly all pupils in classes and around the school is exemplary. They enter lessons and move around the school in a very calm and orderly way and display good manners towards adults and other pupils. In whole school assemblies, nearly all pupils conduct themselves respectfully, in a manner suited to the occasion.

Pupils are very good ambassadors for the school. They are extremely proud of the fact that they often receive letters from places they have visited, complimenting them on the very high standard of their behaviour. Most pupils' excellent behaviour has a powerful impact on their readiness to learn.

Nearly all pupils have a very good understanding of the core values they identify themselves, such as friendship, tolerance and self-belief. For example, Year 4 pupils speak confidently about the meaning of 'tolerance' and explain that it is about not judging people and respecting others. Many give thoughtful examples of how they could be more tolerant themselves.

Nearly all pupils enjoy their lessons. They settle quickly to their tasks and concentrate well on their work. In assemblies, nearly all pupils sing wholeheartedly, including group contributions to rounds and descants. Their singing boosts their sense of belonging to the school community and strengthens their wellbeing.

Throughout the school, nearly all pupils embrace unfamiliar experiences and ideas enthusiastically. For example, during their study of the seaside, the opportunity to observe and touch fish, such as octopus, mackerel and crab, fascinates pupils in the nursery. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 who participate in a residential trip to north Wales develop perseverance, problem solving and teamwork skills to overcome obstacles.

Most pupils are very willing to discuss their work with their peers. Successful co-operation is a strong feature of their learning. For example, Year 6 pupils model strategies to support their peers effectively when solving problems in mathematics. They negotiate possible solutions sensibly and respect each other's contributions.

Most pupils are becoming ambitious, confident learners. They speak with pride about their own progress. For example, when looking through his work over the last year, a pupil in Year 2 described how his handwriting had become neater and neater.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of regular exercise and the need to eat and drink healthily. They participate enthusiastically in physical activities both during the school day and in extra-curricular clubs. The 'trim trail' is popular with many pupils and they enjoy opportunities to develop their physical skills and fitness in extra-curricular activities such as football and netball.

The attendance of most pupils is very good. Although there has been a recent dip due to a number of factors, including a bout of chicken pox, trends in rates of attendance are consistently above those of similar schools up to 2018.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The provision of a rich range of imaginative learning experiences for pupils in the nursery and reception classes gives them an exciting start to their education and secures their positive attitude to learning. The two classes are hives of activity, both inside and outdoors. Teachers and support staff in the early years implement the principles and practice of the foundation phase particularly well.

As they move through the school, pupils continue to enjoy a varied and relevant curriculum. Teachers increasingly incorporate pupils' own ideas into their planning. During 'innovation days,' pupils from reception to Year 6 work alongside one another

and staff to generate ideas for topics they would like to study. Pupils' involvement in planning their work results in very positive attitudes and higher standards of work. For example, pupils in Year 2 suggest studying the 'Gruffalo' story in greater depth and the majority write their own versions of the story at considerable length.

This new approach to curriculum planning is developing well. Teachers are monitoring its implementation carefully and are addressing issues, such as ensuring full coverage of all areas of learning, and planning for progression in pupils' skills development. They adjust plans, when necessary, to take account of pupils' responses and learning needs.

The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of Welsh culture. Pupils study the work of Welsh artists and listen to traditional music, including well-known Welsh hymns such as Calon Lan. Visits to places such as Cardiff Castle and the National Museum of Wales, in connection with their studies, extend pupils' knowledge of Welsh history effectively.

There are many purposeful opportunities for pupils to apply their speaking and listening and literacy skills in a wide variety of contexts across all areas of learning. The provision for pupils to use their numeracy skills in practical contexts is developing well. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to record their investigations in written form when using their numeracy skills. Pupils receive regular opportunities to use their ICT skills to communicate information. However, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their modelling and data handling skills. As a result, most pupils lack confidence in these skills.

Strong working relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils have a very positive impact on pupils' learning. The highly successful management of pupils' behaviour through the use of an extensive range of effective strategies results in a purposeful working atmosphere in all classes.

Nearly all lessons build well on previous learning. For instance, pupils in Year 6 plan newspaper reports following their previous role-play of an interview with a local councillor about plastic pollution. Most lessons provide a good balance between the teacher's input and opportunities for pupils to work individually and in groups.

During lessons, teachers and teaching assistants observe pupils carefully as they work. They give them helpful oral feedback, clarify areas of confusion and suggest ways to improve or extend their work. However, the quality of teachers' written feedback is less effective. There is sometimes too much of it, and often it simply records what pupils have done, rather than having a real impact on pupils' progress.

Teachers adapt tasks effectively for pupils who need more support or who would benefit from a greater challenge. They deploy skilled and talented support staff very well to help pupils achieve their potential. For example, teaching assistants in the foundation phase are skilled at extending pupils' understanding and use of language through well-designed questions and introducing pupils to a wider vocabulary.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school provides a tranquil and welcoming environment for all pupils. It is an extremely happy and caring community, which many pupils regard as a second home. Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

All staff know pupils very well and share a commitment to making a positive difference to their wellbeing. This nurturing ethos enables pupils to thrive and make good progress in their learning. Nearly all pupils value the support they receive from adults and feel that they can depend on them to help with any personal need, as well as in their learning.

The school's promotion of core values has a highly effective influence on pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Each class explores a particular value, such as tolerance, in depth so that they gain a strong understanding of its meaning and of how to implement it in their own lives. Whole school assemblies make a very good contribution to pupils' moral and social development, helping them, for example, to understand how to be a good friend.

The school gives pupils worthwhile opportunities to take on responsibilities and play an active part in its life. Groups of pupils meet regularly to discuss and plan how to make improvements. For example, the eco committee led the development of a 'reflection garden' and the newly formed school parliament identified ways to improve playtimes by creating a 'calm zone'.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is very strong. The special needs co-ordinators analyse data carefully to identify pupils who need extra support with their learning or wellbeing. Regular meetings between the special needs co-ordinators and other members of staff enable them to share constructive advice about how to support identified pupils. Very well trained support staff deliver high quality interventions that improve pupils' literacy, numeracy or personal skills. As a result, nearly all targeted pupils make good progress from their starting points.

A highly effective approach to behaviour management results in the exemplary behaviour and positive attitudes towards school displayed by nearly all pupils. Staff have a deep understanding of pupils' emotional and behavioural needs and support them skilfully. In the foundation phase, for example, they are alert to any sign that a pupil is unhappy. Teaching assistants accompany distressed pupils to the 'calm room', invite them to express their concerns and help pupils manage them. Consequently, most pupils demonstrate improved levels of confidence and wellbeing and engage again in class activities.

The school provides good opportunities for pupils to learn about the importance of keeping themselves healthy and safe. It promotes healthy eating and drinking, and pupils' understanding of the importance of taking regular exercise, effectively. There are many opportunities for pupils to be healthy and active during the school day. For instance, adults lead structured physical activities at lunchtime, which was another request of the school parliament.

There are valuable opportunities for pupils to prepare for their future. For example, during 'open your eyes' week, representatives from local businesses, such as telecommunications and computer scientists, come to school to talk about their work. As a result, pupils develop a greater awareness of possible future career options and higher aspirations for their future.

Pupils enjoy many opportunities to perform for different audiences. The very successful school choir visits residential homes for elderly people and has performed

in Saint David's and City Hall and in an arena in Cardiff. All pupils participate in class assemblies where they share and present their learning experiences to the whole school. Opportunities such as these develop pupils' self-confidence and expressive capacities very well.

A significant strength of the school is its long established and positive partnership with parents. Their participation in a huge range of high quality workshops and programmes helps parents develop their skills in supporting their children's wellbeing and learning at home. For example, there are workshops on cooking healthy foods, managing children's behaviour and counselling them when they are worried or upset. In addition, such experiences help them to develop skills in areas such as carpentry, pottery, business and enterprise. As a result, a few parents undertake programmes that lead to qualifications from Cardiff University.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides very strong and effective leadership. She has established a very clear vision for the school that prioritises the wellbeing of all pupils and raises their aspirations. She shares this vision highly effectively with staff, parents and governors. The school's outstanding care and support for its pupils, which result in excellent standards in their wellbeing, reflect the staff's expert implementation of this vision. It is also evident in the aspirations that staff have for learners and in the enthusiasm nearly all pupils show towards their learning.

Two senior leaders support the headteacher effectively and carry out their leadership roles skilfully. They support her well in setting a clear strategic direction for the school and in leading a team of highly motivated staff. All members of staff understand their specific roles and fulfil them conscientiously and diligently. Leaders deploy staff creatively to make the best use of their expertise in supporting pupils' learning and wellbeing, particularly those who are vulnerable and those with social and emotional needs. The school has sustained and built upon the very strong practice in these aspects of its work, which the last inspection identified as excellent four years ago. This is particularly notable, since there have been several changes of staff since then.

The school has a very strong culture of supporting the professional learning of all members of staff. Robust performance management processes include the identification of relevant opportunities for teachers and support staff to develop their knowledge and skills. Staff benefit from participation in many professional development activities that meet school priorities and personal aspirations effectively. This has a positive impact on improving standards, for example, in developing pupils' speaking and listening skills and meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils.

Leaders monitor all aspects of the school's work using a wide range of first-hand evidence. This includes careful analysis of pupil performance information, undertaking lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and listening to learners. They identify strengths and a few shortcomings well. However, the self-evaluation process does not always identify specific areas for improvement accurately enough.

Leaders allocate responsibilities in order to address priorities in the school's improvement plan flexibly and innovatively. For example, teachers have the

opportunity to assume a leadership role on a short-term basis in order to lead specific projects in which they have an interest and some expertise. As a result, teachers receive valuable experience in developing their leadership skills. The school's effective coaching and mentoring arrangements have supported staff to secure promotion to leadership positions in other schools.

Teachers work productively with other schools to support their continuing professional development. For example, they are preparing purposefully to implement the requirements of the new curriculum for Wales by planning learning experiences jointly with colleagues in other local schools. This has a positive effect on teachers' confidence and understanding and their ability to plan a wide range of engaging experiences for pupils. The school shares its very good practice both internally and externally. For example, teachers from other schools visit to learn about the school's outstanding behaviour management and provision for pupils' wellbeing.

Governors support the school very well and carry out their responsibilities effectively. They have a good understanding of its current and long-term priorities and challenge leaders effectively, for example, in relation to the recent dip in attendance rates.

The headteacher and the bursar, with the support of the governing body, monitor the school's budget carefully. They direct finances well to meet pupils' needs and the school's priorities. For instance, the school uses some of its funding to employ a family liaison officer, which strengthens considerably its partnerships with parents. Although it has recently purchased additional ICT equipment, this has not yet had enough time to make a positive impact on teachers' planning to develop pupils' skills. Leaders use the pupil development grant well to support the delivery of a wide range of intervention programmes that provide effective support for eligible pupils.

Overall, the school has a good range of resources and a learning environment, which it uses well to support teaching and learning. The indoor space for older pupils in the foundation phase and key stage 2 is limited, but pupils benefit from extensive grounds and outdoor areas, which the school has developed imaginatively to support pupils' physical development, play and learning.

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

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