



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

A report on

Pengeulan Primary School

**Penrhiwceiber Road
Miskin
Mountain Ash
RCT
CF45 3UW**

Date of inspection: March 2023

by

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

About Pengeulan Primary School

Name of provider	Pengeulan Primary School
Local authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	None
Number of pupils on roll	124
Pupils of statutory school age	93
Number in nursery classes	24
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 23.0%)	44.3%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 16.1%)	
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/11/2014
Start date of inspection	27/03/2023

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection. Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Pengeulan Primary School is a welcoming and inclusive community where pupils and families feel respected and valued. Positive relationships between staff, pupils and parents generate a strong shared commitment to upholding the school's caring ethos. This impacts positively on pupils' enjoyment of their time in school and on their feeling of belonging. As a result, nearly all pupils show positive attitudes to learning, behave well and grow in confidence as they move through the school.

The school develops pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills successfully. However, provision to extend pupils' use of spoken Welsh is less consistent. Teachers plan a diverse range of stimulating learning experiences that engage most pupils well. They make imaginative use of resources to motivate pupils and use questioning to extend their understanding beneficially. Staff and visitors provide a range of helpful additional support that enables identified pupils to strengthen their communication skills and to enhance their well-being. However, adults do not always provide pupils with enough opportunity to exercise independence in their learning or to develop their creativity fully.

Leaders evaluate the school's performance thoroughly. They reflect constructively on their findings and set a clear strategic direction for the school's work that is well understood by the whole staff. As a result, staff work together well to bring about worthwhile advances, for instance by improving the effectiveness of the teaching of reading and writing. Governors share the values of senior leaders and collaborate productively to strengthen the school's capacity to improve. For example, they provide strong support for the school's efforts in promoting pupils' safety. Leaders provide good opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants to enhance their knowledge and skills. This professional learning increases the effectiveness of their classroom practice and benefits the progress of pupils directly.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve pupils' use of spoken Welsh
- R2 Provide further opportunity for pupils to use their initiative in lessons and to work with independence
- R3 Improve opportunities for pupils to develop and use their creative skills

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils start Pengeulan Primary School with underdeveloped social and communication skills. During their time in school, most pupils make strong progress in their development as learners and as confident members of the school community. Vulnerable pupils and those pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make at least good progress from their starting points.

Most pupils develop their language and communication skills well. Many younger pupils listen appropriately and offer their ideas when responding to questions. As they move through the school, most pupils become confident to express their views clearly. Most older pupils listen attentively during lessons. They offer opinions respectfully, acknowledging the ideas of others. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 suggest motives for a character's behaviour when reading a class novel together. They respond considerately to the ideas of their peers and put forward alternative views referring to what they have read to explain their thinking.

Many younger pupils enjoy sharing and joining in with familiar stories. As they move through the school, most pupils develop good phonics skills, enabling them to read an increasing range of words with growing confidence. By Year 2, many pupils begin to read with fluency. Many older pupils infer the meaning of unfamiliar words successfully using contextual clues and show a good understanding of what they read. By Year 5 and Year 6, most pupils recall their reading clearly and summarise the plot and themes of stories effectively. More able readers express clear preferences for the books they choose and describe what attracts them to a particular author or genre.

Most pupils develop their writing skills well. Most younger pupils progress steadily from making marks and writing single letters to attempting simple words and sentences. By Year 2, many pupils begin to write at greater length, for instance to retell a familiar story about a boy visiting an island with his grandfather. Older pupils use their writing skills for a broad range of purposes across the curriculum effectively. Many make beneficial use of their writing reference journals to enrich the quality of their work, for instance to select precise vocabulary suited to the purpose of their writing. Most older pupils plan, draft and improve their work purposefully. They rewrite and improve weaker sections to communicate more clearly and expand their creative ideas. For example, pupils in Year 4 use the structure of a newspaper report to sequence their writing successfully and embellish their eye-witness accounts imaginatively to generate intrigue.

Most pupils develop their mathematical skills well as they move through the school. The youngest pupils recognise and order single-digit numbers when collecting eggs. Many count forwards and backwards with confidence. By Year 1 and Year 2, most pupils show a growing understanding of mathematical vocabulary. For example, they explain how to partition numbers to make doubling easier and how a sequence of shapes or numbers repeats in a pattern. Older pupils develop a good range of mental and written strategies to calculate accurately. They apply these successfully when solving word problems and to calculate averages in science investigations. Overall,

however, pupils do not apply their mathematical skills in practical contexts often enough.

Younger pupils make sound progress in developing their use of spoken Welsh. Pupils in the nursery and reception class ask simple, familiar questions in Welsh confidently, such as to request flowers of particular colours when completing a jigsaw. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2, describe the weather accurately and use Welsh for routine daily activities competently. Older pupils expand their vocabulary helpfully during regular Helpwr Heddiw sessions. However, older pupils' use of spoken Welsh outside of specific lessons is limited and many pupils lack the skills to speak confidently or to pronounce words with consistent accuracy.

Most pupils use their digital skills very well in a range of contexts across their learning. Many younger pupils use technology seamlessly during their activity. For example, pupils in the nursery and reception class use tablet devices to practise their Welsh language skills independently. Nearly all older pupils make valuable use of their digital skills to enhance their learning. For example, pupils in Year 4 use virtual reality headsets to explore the features of an ancient Egyptian temple and pupils in Years 5 and 6 edit their research to present key facts about a famous Victorian in a social media profile.

Most pupils show development in their creative skills through a variety of artistic activities. For example, younger pupils use clay for modelling and pupils in Year 3 build on these skills further to make symmetrical ceramic tiles for a mosaic as part of the project about the Romans. Older pupils use digital tools to manipulate images and perform poems they have written. However, across the school, the opportunities for pupils to develop their creative skills are limited and pupils do not make as much progress as they could.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils show commitment to the school's positive ethos. They understand that promoting kindness, respect and safety is an expectation for all members of the school's community and strive to meet this goal. Pupils are welcoming to visitors and keen to share the pride they feel in their school.

Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in school. They feel valued as individuals and appreciate the strong support they receive from adults. Most pupils demonstrate consideration towards adults and to their peers. They show respect for the contributions and opinions of others and co-operate well together. For example, pupils listen patiently to each other and take turns appropriately when working in small groups or with their talking partners. Most pupils behave consistently well during lessons and when moving around the school at break and lunch times.

Most pupils show positive attitudes to learning. They are focused and quick to settle in lessons. Most engage readily with their learning and sustain their concentration to complete tasks in the given time. Many answer questions and are eager to share their work. Most older pupils review their work appropriately. For example, during 'pit stops' in lessons, they identify what they have done well and where they need to improve their work. They respond positively to verbal and written feedback from teachers. For example, most pupils correct identified errors in their work. Pupils

generally follow their teacher's guidance to make worthwhile redrafts of sections of their written work, though they do not always have the opportunity to complete this thoroughly. Many are developing the skills to persevere and to be resilient when faced with difficulties.

Pupils participate in a range of active pupil leadership groups enthusiastically. Each group has established a set of objectives that gives clear purpose to its work. For example, the digital leaders have set up and run an after-school coding club and the eco council are promoting sustainability by fundraising to plant trees in Kenya. The pupil leadership groups meet together as a Senedd each term to monitor progress and adapt their plans. They lead an assembly to feedback to the whole school and produce a pupil newsletter to celebrate their success and outline future actions. Pupils feel strongly that their voice is heard and that their opinions are valued.

Pupils know how to make healthy choices. They recognise food and drinks that are good for them and understand the benefit of exercise for their physical and mental health. Many pupils enjoy participating in a range of after-school clubs and activities that promote physical activity and enhance their well-being, such as football, netball gardening and mindfulness. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online and know how to seek help if they have any concerns about inappropriate online behaviour or material. The school council has supported pupils to develop a clear understanding of what bullying is and the importance of telling someone they trust if they encounter it.

Pupil attendance is recovering strongly post pandemic and is a strength of the school. Most pupils arrive punctually and show a good understanding of the importance of attending well. They enjoy being in school and speak positively about the relationships they have with adults and the experiences the school provides.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school's curriculum builds pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding systematically and provides clear progression as pupils progress through the school. Teachers plan a suitable breadth of learning experiences that motivate and engage most pupils successfully. They make valuable use of trips to enrich the context for pupils' learning and arrange for visitors to share their interests and expertise with pupils beneficially.

Adults have warm and supportive relationships with pupils. They demonstrate patience, humour and enjoyment in their role. Their positive approach creates a calm, relaxed atmosphere in classrooms that helps pupils to engage confidently in their learning. Teachers set clear expectations for pupils' attitudes in lessons, and they model these well. They manage pupils' behaviour skilfully to provide sensitive support when needed while maintaining a clear focus on pupils' learning.

There is a shared vision for teaching and learning that is evident in classes across the school. Teachers recap previous learning at start of sessions and demonstrate secure subject knowledge. They make sophisticated use of language, such as relevant technical vocabulary, consistently. Teachers make valuable use of 'hooks' at the beginning of lessons to capture pupils' interest and spark their imagination. For

example, teachers use a video message from the police to inspire pupils to create a wanted poster.

Teachers plan and resource activities effectively. They provide clear objectives for pupils' learning that help them to focus their efforts appropriately. Teachers ensure that most tasks are well suited to the needs of different groups and individuals. However, in a few instances, they are too cautious about letting pupils take the initiative in their learning. This reduces the momentum in lessons and stifles pupils' independence. As a result, pupils do not always apply themselves with as much enthusiasm or creativity as they could.

Teachers use questioning to develop pupils' understanding effectively and to encourage them to express their thinking clearly, for example by urging pupils to use words precisely when sharing their ideas and opinions. They use their assessment of pupils' progress to inform their planning and to identify suitable next steps for pupils' learning. They provide helpful verbal and written feedback that supports pupils to improve their work. However, they do not always ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunity to act on this fully.

Across the school, teachers provide good opportunities to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills. For example, teachers in Years 3 to 6 make beneficial use of daily whole-class reading sessions to develop pupils' comprehension skills. In many instances, these texts enrich the context for pupils' topic work productively. This practice helps to promote pupils' enjoyment of reading and provides a valuable opportunity to extend the range and quality of reading all pupils engage with as they move through the school.

Provision for the development of younger pupils' Welsh language skills is sound. Teachers support pupils to use spoken Welsh frequently through games, songs and as part of classroom routines, such as at snack time. Teachers provide regular, short sessions for pupils in Years 3 to 6 that help to extend pupils' vocabulary. Overall, however, adults make too little use of spoken Welsh throughout the school day and teachers do not provide sufficient opportunity to build pupils' knowledge systematically. As a result, many older pupils, in particular, lack the skills to speak Welsh confidently.

The school provides an attractive and well-organised learning environment. Adults make good use of classroom displays as a resource for pupils' learning and to celebrate their progress. Staff use the school's steep grounds imaginatively by creating areas on different levels that provide valuable outdoor spaces for all classes.

Teaching assistants provide worthwhile support in lessons and when leading individual or small group activities with pupils outside class. They liaise closely with one another and with teachers to ensure that the additional support they give is well targeted to meet pupils' needs.

Care, support and guidance

The school provides a calm, welcoming and supportive environment where all pupils feel secure and valued. All staff embody this caring ethos consistently and it is well understood by all members of the school community. As a result, most pupils show a

strong commitment to following 'The Pengeulan Way' and share in the school's aspiration to create a kind, respectful and safe community for all.

All staff know pupils well and demonstrate warmth and respect in their daily interactions. They blend patience with clear and consistent expectations that help pupils to feel confident in the support and guidance that adults provide. Positive relationships between staff and pupils set the conditions for most pupils to thrive.

The school provides valuable additional support for more vulnerable pupils, including through a range of interventions that are carefully tailored to meet their individual needs. For example, a partnership between the school's family engagement officer and a youth engagement worker has impacted positively on the self-esteem and confidence of identified pupils. The school's participation in a cluster-based mentoring programme helps pupils with their emotional needs and strengthens their attendance beneficially. Overall, the school's sustained focus on creating a positive climate for pupils' learning and development is a commendable strength of its provision.

The school caters well for pupils with ALN. The school's ALN leader works with staff and other agencies to identify the needs of pupils swiftly. She draws purposefully on the advice and guidance of specialist staff beyond the school to put in place appropriate support. Staff set clear objectives for pupils' development and monitor their progress diligently. They work well together to reflect on and adjust this provision when needed. The school works closely with parents to build a shared understanding of the individual needs of each pupil. This helps parents to understand the progress their child is making and what they can do to support them. Parents value this constructive relationship. They feel well supported by staff and identify the positive impact the school has in enabling them to access further help.

The school uses a range of interventions to support pupils to narrow gaps in their learning effectively. For example, teaching assistants deliver small group and individual sessions to develop pupils' reading and communication skills. Leaders map provision thoroughly and monitor pupils' progress rigorously. This ensures that the school evaluates the benefit of interventions accurately and is able to celebrate success and to adapt provision efficiently when needed.

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles. Staff support pupils to contribute their ideas and pupils feel that their views are listened to. Staff and pupils have worked together to develop child-friendly policies in key areas of interest to pupils. For example, pupils have developed an anti-bullying policy that promotes pupils' understanding of what bullying is and how to deal with incidents effectively. The school supports pupils to share their activity through a termly pupil newsletter and through their participation in a school-wide Senedd. These opportunities develop pupils' understanding of their role as active citizens in shaping the aims and goals of the community they belong to.

The school has strong, beneficial links with the local community. For example, through its partnerships with St Winifred's Church and Lee Gardens Pool, the school promotes opportunities for pupils to participate in activities outside of the school day and during holiday periods. Parents appreciate the consistent support that the school provides for pupils' well-being and the help given to families. For example, the school

provides practical opportunities for parents and carers to develop their cookery skills, to learn first aid and to access local sources of support to alleviate the impact of the current cost of living pressures.

Staff provide suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about diversity and to develop positive attitudes towards difference. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 participated in a local competition to celebrate diversity and produced a winning poem entry. The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about human impact on the environment and to develop their understanding of sustainability. For example, through their topic work, older pupils learn about the threat to species as a result of global warming.

The school makes effective use of visits and visitors to enrich the curriculum. For example, visits from members of a rugby club help to develop pupils' skills and enhance their enjoyment of physical play. Trips to venues such as St Fagans National Museum of History and to an outdoor education centre strengthen pupils' knowledge and understanding of their learning in class and enhance their appreciation of the varied environment of Wales. The school uses grant funding to subsidise the cost of these experiences and to ensure that family finances are not a barrier to pupils' participation. Staff run a variety of popular after-school clubs and provide good opportunities for pupils to participate in tournaments and competitions with local schools. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop a clear sense of their Welsh identity and of Wales as a nation. Overall, however, opportunities for pupils to develop and to use their creative skills are less well developed.

The school has effective arrangements to achieve good rates of pupils' attendance. Staff monitor absence carefully and work closely with families to overcome barriers to attendance when these arise. There is a robust culture of safeguarding across the school. All staff understand the importance of keeping pupils safe and carry out their responsibilities thoroughly. As a result, the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides thoughtful and effective leadership. She has a clear vision that places the needs of pupils, staff and families at the heart of decision-making. As a result, the school has successfully developed a welcoming and inclusive culture that is valued by all members of the school community. This ensures that nearly all pupils feel a secure sense of belonging and engage positively with the learning experiences the school provides.

Leaders set high expectations for staff and pupils. They model values and professional behaviours that inform the day-to-day activity of the whole staff team. For example, they respond compassionately and with understanding to manage difficulties pupils experience. Their caring lead is followed by all staff and ensures that pupils are highly respected and consistently treated with empathy.

Leaders provide worthwhile opportunities for all staff to assume responsibilities and to contribute purposefully to the school's development. The school's arrangements for performance management and to promote teachers' professional learning have a

positive effect on pupils' well-being and progress. For example, changes to how the school teaches writing have improved pupils' skills, and training for individual staff has enabled them to meet the emotional needs of vulnerable pupils successfully.

The governing body bring a wide range of relevant skills and expertise to their roles. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They make worthwhile visits to meet with pupils, to observe classes and to evaluate the school environment. This enables them to contribute purposefully to the school's strategic direction. Governors provide leaders with an appropriate balance of support and challenge and hold them to account thoroughly. They review key policies and procedures robustly to make sure that they operate effectively, for instance in relation to safeguarding. The governing body ensure that the school makes appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

The school has a strong culture of self-evaluation and a good track record of achieving improvements in key areas. Leaders plan the use of resources strategically to support groups of pupils, such as those eligible for free school meals. Their spending decisions impact beneficially on the well-being and achievement of the most vulnerable pupils. For example, they make efficient use of the pupil development grant to help pupils narrow gaps in their learning and to provide mentoring sessions that improve pupils' readiness to learn.

Leaders set realistic timescales for improvement and allocate appropriate responsibilities to staff. They track progress closely and plan future actions responsively. For example, leaders have identified the need to improve pupils' Welsh language skills, although this work is currently at an early stage of development. Leaders address national and local priorities well. These include arrangements for keeping pupils safe, reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment, and implementing the Curriculum for Wales.

Leaders develop the school's physical environment well. They create an attractive and engaging learning environment, indoors and outdoors, that supports teaching and learning and strengthens pupils' enjoyment of school. The school's grounds include a recently developed forest area that provides a stimulating resource to promote outdoor learning.

All staff have suitable opportunities to strengthen their professional knowledge and practice. For example, whole-school training to strengthen the school's provision for reading and writing ensures that successful approaches are well understood and applied consistently across the school. Leaders identify effective practice within the school and enable this to be shared more widely. They provide valuable opportunities for staff to collaborate with other schools. For example, teachers have used technology to establish a shared space with a nearby school where staff and pupils work together and share their learning. This has enabled helpful social and educational links between the schools and enabled teachers to share and reflect on their practice.

The school's relationship with families and the local community is a notable strength. Partnerships with parents and with local organisations are mutually beneficial and contribute purposefully to improved outcomes for most pupils, especially for their well-being and self-esteem. Parents feel that the school is more than a place of

learning and strongly appreciate the support and guidance the school provides. As a result of these positive aspects, there is effective co-operation at all levels of leadership, which contributes significantly to the school's welcoming and inclusive ethos.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

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

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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