



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

A report on

Pontlliw Primary School

**Clordir Road
Pontlliw
Pontarddulais
City and County of Swansea
SA4 9FA**

Date of inspection: March 2023

by

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

About Pontlliw Primary School

Name of provider	Pontlliw Primary School
Local authority	City and County of Swansea
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	223
Pupils of statutory school age	180
Number in nursery classes	28
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%)	10.5%
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%)	10%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	1.9%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	3.8%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2013
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/07/2014
Start date of inspection	20/03/2023

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

Pontlliw Primary is a nurturing, happy and hard-working school that places a high priority on the well-being of its staff and pupils. Leaders have created a strong culture of mutual support when working together towards the school's core values of 'Respect, Care, Community'. These values are shared across the school community and encourage respect and kindness between staff and pupils. Staff ensure that the local community is a key part of the school's life and work. As a result, the school forms a central part of community life and there is a strong culture of belonging and community pride.

The school's curriculum provides a wide range of interesting and stimulating experiences across many of the areas of learning and experience. Pupils' views are an important part of the process of planning activities and, as a result, most pupils apply themselves enthusiastically to their experiences. There is a positive environment in the classrooms and most teachers use a good range of effective teaching techniques to deliver interesting and engaging learning experiences. However, there is a tendency for teachers to over-direct learning. This limits the development of pupils' independent learning and thinking skills.

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, based on developing pupils' well-being, sense of citizenship and belonging. She shares this vision successfully with everyone in the school community. Leaders support the headteacher effectively and there is a strong sense of teamwork across the school. Governors are very supportive of the school's vision and work, although they do not play a robust enough role in the school's self-evaluation processes. As a result, their role as critical friend to the school is underdeveloped.

There is effective support for pupils with additional learning needs, and the school thinks carefully about how to support pupils' basic skills in literacy and numeracy as well as addressing their social and emotional needs. As a result, the school is an inclusive environment where staff work hard to ensure that pupils make good progress and are becoming ambitious and capable learners.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills and make decisions in relation to their learning
- R2 Ensure that members of the governing body play a full part in self-evaluation processes to support the school to identify all strengths and areas for improvement

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 the school's commitment to partnership working with parents and carers, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils enter school with skills at the expected level for their age. Most make good progress as they move through the school. Groups of pupils, including those who are eligible to free school meals and those with additional learning needs, make good progress relative to their starting points. By the time they are in Year 6, many pupils are skilled, competent and capable learners.

Most pupils in the early years make good progress in acquiring new vocabulary. Most reception pupils talk confidently to an adult and explain their thinking, for example when talking excitedly about making soup for the Big Bad Wolf. Many pupils in Years 1 and 2 develop as confident speakers and present to larger groups. As they move through the school, pupils develop a wider spoken vocabulary, which they use well in a wide range of contexts. Pupils in Year 6, for example, describe the behaviour of a leprechaun as disrespectful, unreasonable and mischievous.

Nearly all pupils in the early years identify and respond to a wide and varied range of instructions in Welsh. By Year 2, they use a good range of simple sentence patterns competently, such as 'Beth wyt t'in hoffi?' and 'Ble rwyd t'in byw?'. The oldest pupils develop their Welsh speaking skills well. Many introduce themselves confidently and use a good range of connectives and vocabulary to extend what they want to say and to add interest for the listener.

Most pupils' listening skills develop well throughout the school. They learn to respond to the contribution of others and listen well when collaborating on tasks. Many offer an alternative perspective, to one expressed by another pupil, confidently.

Most pupils throughout the school develop a love of reading and become capable, confident readers. Most pupils in the early years quickly learn to sequence stories successfully using picture clues. They learn letter sounds rapidly. Many pupils show empathy with a character and engage well with the storyline. For example, Year 4 pupils discuss the problems associated with wearing jungle-themed football shorts. Many of the oldest pupils read confidently with a sophisticated understanding of the text. They name favourite authors and talk confidently about the different types of books they like to read.

Nearly all pupils make good progress in writing in the early years and begin to form letters correctly. By the time they reach Year 2, many pupils begin to edit their work and write in different genres well, for example when giving a set of instructions for how to catch a lake monster from Welsh mythology. Many older pupils develop a good understanding of sentence structure and use punctuation appropriately. They develop a good handwriting style and spell accurately, becoming accomplished writers.

Many pupils throughout the school begin to tackle new challenges that require complex reasoning. For example, when discussing the relationship between karma and forgiveness, many pupils in Year 5 explain their thinking clearly and justify decisions taken. They show good resilience in these situations and are willing to try

different strategies to reach a conclusion. However, in general, pupils do not sufficiently develop their independent learning skills or make decisions in relation to their learning.

Most pupils in the early years make good progress in developing their understanding of mathematical concepts in relevant, practical contexts. For example, they use non-standard measures such as the footprint of a giant to measure a wide variety of objects. Most pupils continue to make good progress in a broad range of mathematical topics as they move through the school. By the time they reach Year 6, many pupils are competent mathematicians. They apply their skills confidently in real life contexts for example when calculating how many kilojoules of energy they use in a typical day.

Most pupils make good progress in developing digital skills. They are particularly good at applying their skills in meaningful contexts. For example, Year 1 pupils create videos using green screen technique to present the weather. Most older pupils use their digital skills confidently for a broad range of purposes. For example, Year 5 pupils produce an informative database giving information about countries that took part in the football World Cup.

Many pupils produce striking art work, based on a good working knowledge of local and internationally acclaimed painters. Their creative skills are a significant strength.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in school. They are happy and feel respected. They are proud of their school and feel that their views are listened to.

Nearly all pupils behave exceptionally well across the school and show respect for other people and the school environment. They are very welcoming and courteous towards visitors, particularly when talking enthusiastically about their learning experiences. Nearly all pupils are polite and demonstrate caring attitudes towards each other. For example, the youngest learners help one another clean up after splashing in muddy puddles during 'Welly Wednesday' and older pupils act as 'Brilliant Buddies' in the playground.

Most pupils understand the importance of healthy eating, drinking and exercise. For example, younger pupils learn how to brush their teeth as part of the 'Tooth Fairy Challenge', while older pupils enjoy exploring what happens to hard-boiled eggs when they are placed in water, milk or fizzy drinks. As a result, they learn more about the effect of fizzy drinks on their teeth. Younger pupils develop their physical skills well. Older pupils enjoy timetabled periods of swimming lessons at a local pool and participate enthusiastically in the Daily Mile. As a result, most develop as healthy, confident individuals.

Many pupils take responsibility for aspects of their own learning. For example, pupils who are 'Sports Ambassadors' look after the playground equipment. They recently attended worthwhile training and implemented new initiatives, for example to improve warm up sessions before PE lessons.

Nearly all pupils show a good understanding of children's rights and value the way these are promoted by the school. They participate in purposeful pupil voice groups and develop a strong sense of responsibility. For example, the 'Digital Dragons' use the school's social media purposefully to promote important messages about keeping safe online.

Nearly all pupils understand that emotional well-being is important and participate actively in lessons that promote good mental health. For example, many use breathing techniques, finger kaleidoscopes or calming music effectively to help their concentration during activities.

Across the school, nearly all pupils approach their learning with curiosity and with great enthusiasm. For instance, younger pupils talk enthusiastically about the life cycle of chickens, whilst older pupils enjoy finding out about robots, how they work and how they help humans with tasks such as space exploration and mowing the lawn. Most pupils remain on task throughout their lessons, and complete their activities successfully. Nearly all pupils throughout the school are ready to learn at the start of lessons and move calmly between different activities.

Most pupils work well with their peers and demonstrate respect for the contributions of others. For example, when learning about Jack and the Beanstalk, younger children discuss whether 'strong' is a good or bad word and listen attentively to the different opinions of their friends. Older pupils offer supportive feedback to their classmates on ways to improve their robotic music compositions.

Throughout the school, pupils are given a range of feedback to help improve their learning. Most pupils respond positively to verbal feedback from adults during lessons. Pupils also respond maturely to help provided by their peers, for example when explaining how to solve a tricky maths problem. This gives them the confidence to make good progress in their work.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has a strong shared vision for teaching and learning, which is linked successfully to a purposeful curriculum. This approach promotes pupil well-being and learning effectively.

The school takes full account of pupils' individual learning needs in the planning of the curriculum. The strong emphasis on pupil choice, when planning learning activities, has a significant impact on pupil engagement in lessons. For example, all pupils take part in planning the start of a new topic using 'Everyone Plan In Class' (EPIC) sessions. As a result, pupils feel that they have a contribution to make and they engage very well in lessons. The school is very effective in ensuring that this includes pupils eligible for free school meals and those from low-income families.

Staff have high expectations of all pupils in terms of what they can achieve and the progress they make. They also have high expectations of behaviour and this has created an ethos of mutual respect where immaculate behaviour is the norm. If pupils get upset at any stage, staff manage these situations quickly and sensitively. Staff throughout the school have strong relationships with the pupils.

Teaching and learning experiences support an effective Welsh ethos in the school that results in most pupils developing sound Welsh language skills. A few teachers incorporate the Welsh language into their lessons to a high standard. The cultural, linguistic and diverse nature of Wales is embedded firmly in the curriculum. This is a significant strength. The curriculum builds powerfully from links to its community to Swansea and beyond, for example when linking the buildings seen in a visit to St Fagan's National Museum of History with buildings in Pontlliw. This builds a strong sense of identity and belonging throughout the school.

The school provides numerous authentic and engaging learning experiences that develop pupils' knowledge and skills well. Many teachers provide well-planned opportunities for pupils to develop their listening, speaking and numeracy skills in meaningful contexts across the curriculum. For example, the curriculum includes an enterprise project where pupils plan a school fair based on a given budget. Provision to develop pupil digital skills is sound. For example, older pupils use a range of presentations, spreadsheets and databases with accuracy. The school's provision and support for reading and writing are sound.

The school is particularly effective in supporting pupils' well-being. This provision is well established following the time when the school was closed for the pandemic and has resulted in a calm, secure environment where pupils' individual needs take a high priority.

Teachers set work at an appropriate level of difficulty for all groups with classes, often giving the pupils choice over the level of challenge different tasks present. This approach is successful in ensuring that almost all pupils engage successfully with the tasks set.

Written feedback from teachers moves pupils' learning forward effectively. Pupils respond purposefully to helpful written comments and are given valuable time to respond to ways forward suggested by the teacher. Verbal feedback from staff is prompt and effective in most classes and questioning of pupils to improve their understanding is a particular strength. Many teachers use effective strategies to provide feedback during sessions, such as 'pit stops' and paired talking. They respond to pupils' learning during lessons and activities and adapt their approach accordingly. They provide valuable opportunities for pupils to assess their own and each other's learning.

Teachers deploy support staff well, making the most of their expertise. Support staff are clear about their role and ensure that all pupils have access to the learning taking place. In a few instances, teachers direct the pupils to such an extent that it limits their opportunities to decide what and how they learn. Teachers' use of 'Missions' provides a good element of choice for pupils, although this approach limits opportunities for pupils, including the oldest and most able, to decide how they would like to present their work.

The school helps pupils to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to make healthy lifestyle choices well. For example, the school promotes healthy eating and drinking through educating pupils about what constitutes a healthy diet and a well-balanced meal.

Care, support and guidance

All staff understand their roles and responsibilities in contributing robustly to pupils' safety and well-being. They ensure that pupils' well-being and safety are prominent elements of school life. Leaders embed a culture of purposeful safeguarding processes among all staff and these practices are an integral part of their daily routine. As a result, the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. The school has effective systems to monitor and improve attendance. Following the pandemic, rates of attendance dropped significantly. However, recent measures taken by the school have led to improvements.

The school has an extremely caring and inclusive ethos where pupils and adults feel highly valued. Staff know and respect the pupils, their families and the local community very well. Parents share a strong belief that the school welcomes and cares for their children exceptionally. As a result, the school is a happy place to learn and work.

The school supports pupils with additional learning needs very effectively, and benefits from good leadership from the school's additional learning needs co-ordinator and experienced support assistants. Staff work purposefully with the co-ordinator to identify actions to provide focused support for pupils with additional learning needs, for example through training on supporting pupils with emotional needs. Pupils across the school benefit from the school's positive play approach, which helps them find purposeful ways to deal with their emotions.

The school is an inclusive learning community. It provides valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures, for example when exploring the big question 'Why do we celebrate?' Many children enthusiastically celebrate their unique skills, ranging from being able to do underwater handstands and being very kind, to having diverse heritage. Older pupils celebrate diversity, for example through their involvement in 'The World Reimagined' project celebrating the 100th anniversary of Nelson Mandela's birth and his legacy.

The school actively supports a healthy lifestyle, for example by selling fruit during morning break time and promoting exercise. Through the school, nearly all pupils participate enthusiastically in a range of suitable physical activities.

Teachers provide a variety of valuable experiences to promote pupils' moral and spiritual development. They provide regular opportunities for pupils to reflect on their rights, relationships and responsibilities, and to think about what they are thankful for.

The school has a beneficial range of opportunities that helps pupils to develop a good understanding of Wales, their local community and their place in it. Pupils in the Criw Cymraeg lead activities in school, and the 'Dyma Fi, That's Me' project across the school provided engaging opportunities for pupils to explore what makes them special.

Following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, the school has re-established links with the local community and provides an extensive range of experiences for pupils. These include visits to the National Botanic Garden of Wales, the Glynn Vivian Art

Gallery and St Fagan's National Museum of History. The school also offers valuable opportunities to contribute to the local community. These include posting positive messages to neighbours, and showing care and compassion when visiting the community hub, or donating blankets to the local animal shelter.

The school provides a wide range of extracurricular activities and clubs such as sports, film, arts and crafts and board games, which support social and physical development. Some of these provide valuable opportunities for older pupils to contribute to the design and delivery of sessions. For example, older children take pride in leading the Mindfulness Club, which supports positive emotional well-being.

The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their skills for life. For example, enterprise projects across the school allow them to work in teams to develop creative products to sell such as slime, pillowcases, keyrings and pebble magnets. These opportunities teach pupils about different ways to work together, budget and manage their money.

The school's provision for relationships and sexual education is at an early stage of development.

Leadership and management

Leaders place high value on mutual respect, trust, and care for the whole community, with pupil well-being as a priority for all. The headteacher works relentlessly with the senior leadership team, staff, pupils and parents to develop a shared vision and strong aspirations for the school. As a result, all staff focus on developing a caring and inclusive environment, where all pupils and adults feel valued, relationships throughout the school are positive and a shared commitment exists among staff to improve provision and learning across the school.

The school has recently implemented a rigorous programme of self-evaluation and improvement processes. Leaders are beginning to use a range of purposeful monitoring activities to evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development. These include the views of pupils and parents, and analyses of pupil progress data, such as baseline data when pupils start school. Leaders use the findings from the self-evaluation processes to develop the school's improvement plan effectively. However, these processes are recent and have not identified teachers' over-direction, limiting pupils' opportunity to make independent decisions on what and how they learn.

The headteacher has high expectations of her own performance and that of staff. All members of staff have improvement targets that link closely with the school's improvement plan and their individual professional development priorities. Progress against these is evaluated on a termly basis and the headteacher monitors teachers' performance regularly. The headteacher challenges the school's performance regularly and looks at ways to improve continuously. As a result, the school has a record of consistent improvement over time.

Members of the governing body are extremely supportive of the school. They receive detailed reports from the headteacher, which focus on progress against the priorities in the improvement plan. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, the governing

body has not participated robustly enough in the school's self-evaluation processes. As a result, governors do not have a comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and this limits their ability to act as critical friends. The governing body ensures that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders have created a positive culture and ethos to promote and support the professional learning of all staff. They make good use of professional enquiry to support school improvement. As a result, leadership capacity across the school is strengthened. The school has purposeful links with local universities that support the development of trainee teachers. Leaders recognise the positive impact this partnership has on school improvement, particularly in keeping abreast with new initiatives in education. The headteacher and staff collaborate well with other schools and external partners, for instance to plan for and implement the new curriculum successfully.

The exceptional partnership between the school and parents is a particular strength, bringing the school to the heart of the community. The school operates a highly effective open-door policy and communicates superbly with parents to ensure that they are aware of day-to-day activities. The school's web site is current and informative, and it is used very effectively to celebrate and share day-to-day school life with parents and the wider community. Parents speak very highly of the commitment leaders and staff show in supporting them and their children's learning, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the school provided parents with purposeful and valuable online workshops that shared useful strategies with parents to help them to support their child with emotional regulation and anxiety.

Leaders monitor the budget carefully and ensure that spending decisions are in line with the school's priorities for improvement. Leaders allocate resources in the classrooms effectively and use the pupil development grant wisely to provide specific interventions across the school, such as counselling and family liaison, to ensure that all building blocks for strong well-being are in place.

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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