



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

**A report on**

**Pentrebane Primary School**

**Beechley Drive  
Pentrebane  
Cardiff  
CF5 3SG**

**Date of inspection: June 2023**

**by**

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

## About Pentrebane Primary School

Name of provider	Pentrebane Primary School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	220
Pupils of statutory school age	152
Number in nursery classes	41
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%)	53.4%
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%)	23.7%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	17.8%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2009
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	15/05/2015
Start date of inspection	19/06/2023

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](https://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

Most pupils in Pentrebane Primary School behave well. They are courteous to each other, to staff and to visitors. Staff at the school support the well-being of pupils effectively. They have created an inclusive, nurturing environment where pupils feel safe and cared for. Teachers and teaching assistants deliver an appropriate range of interventions to support pupils' emotional health, and this is having a positive impact on pupils' well-being.

As pupils move through the school, the progress they make is inconsistent. This means that too many pupils do not develop their skills in writing, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) or Welsh well enough. These weaknesses have a negative effect on their work in other areas of the curriculum. The school is beginning to use an increasing range of visits and visitors to enhance pupils' experiences. Pupils enjoy these and respond positively, talking enthusiastically about what they have learnt. However, the school's curriculum does not offer opportunities for pupils to develop and use their skills in a co-ordinated and progressive manner. Across the school, staff have forged strong working relationships with pupils. However, the quality of teaching across the school is too variable. Often, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low and the pace of learning is too slow. Teachers regularly structure activities too tightly and guide pupils' learning too much. This hampers pupils' capacity to become independent learners who can work things out and think for themselves. Teachers' feedback to pupils does not always help them to understand what they need to do in order to improve their work.

The school does not have a stable and effective leadership structure. This is impacting significantly on the school's ability to meet the needs of its pupils and ensure the progressive development of their skills, knowledge and understanding. Over time, leaders have not monitored the school's work robustly enough. This means that they have not identified major shortcomings in the school's work or put in place actions to address them. Consequently, important national priorities such as planning to implement the curriculum for Wales are still at an early stage of development and the overall quality of teaching and learning is not good enough. Leaders have not promoted the importance of good attendance successfully enough. They have not analysed attendance issues or addressed persistent absence effectively and therefore attendance rates remain too low. Members of the school's governing body are keen and enthusiastic but due to an insufficient number of members, and an overreliance on the views of leaders about the quality of the school's work, they have been unable to provide effective support and challenge to the school.

## Recommendations

- R1 Address the safeguarding issues identified during the inspection
- R2 Establish an effective leadership and governance structure that evaluates the impact of teaching and assessment on raising pupils' standards appropriately
- R3 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment so that pupils make appropriate progress, particularly in writing, numeracy, ICT and Welsh
- R4 Develop an effective curriculum that engages all pupils and supports the progressive development of their skills across the curriculum
- R5 Improve pupils' attendance

## What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress usually every four to six months.

## Main evaluation

### Learning

On entry, most pupils have skills, knowledge and understanding that are lower than those expected for their age. These youngest pupils settle well and make good progress in developing their skills and positive attitudes to learning when they first join the school. However, throughout Year 1 and Year 2, this progress slows and, overall, in the older year groups, pupils make limited progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding. This is due to a lack of challenge in many lessons and activities and the failure of leaders to identify inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Most pupils in the specialist resource base make sound progress in developing their skills across the curriculum.

Many of the youngest pupils, including those in the resource base and those with additional learning needs (ALN), make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills from a low starting point. They learn to listen attentively to an adult, follow simple instructions carefully and are keen to talk about their work with visitors. When lessons and learning activities are well planned and engaging, most pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 listen suitably. They continue to make appropriate progress with their speaking skills and articulate their ideas clearly when talking about their work, for example when discussing the plight of many children in Indonesia.

Many of the youngest pupils make good progress with their reading. They learn the sounds of letters effectively and apply these skills to their work. They talk animatedly about the characters in stories. For example, they describe the Big Bad Wolf from the story of The Three Little Pigs. Many older pupils read with fluency and demonstrate a secure understanding of the increasingly complex texts they read. They enjoy reading and show a real interest in the class novels they study. They identify themes from these novels and justify their opinions about the text.

Younger pupils make good progress with their early writing skills. For example, pupils in the reception class practise writing their high frequency words during literacy activities and transfer these skills to their independent writing successfully. By Year 3, they become more confident writers and begin to use more exciting vocabulary to add interest to their work. In the older year groups, a minority of pupils begin to write well, using interesting vocabulary to hold the attention of the reader. However, many of these pupils do not write in enough depth across the curriculum sufficiently often and, as a result, they make too little progress with their extended writing skills.

Many pupils make a positive start in developing their early number skills. For example, nursery pupils build a house of certain dimensions using a specified number of real bricks. By Year 2, many pupils have a suitable understanding of number facts to 100 and use physical resources well to add and subtract numbers. They recognise simple two-dimensional shapes and use money in their play. A minority of pupils from Year 3 onwards begin to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills suitably. For example, pupils in Year 5 explain why you cannot draw a quadrilateral with only three right angles. However, overall, pupils' numerical skills develop slowly as they move through the school, and they do not use and develop these skills across the curriculum to extend or deepen their learning. The majority of older pupils do not apply these skills purposefully in everyday situations.

Throughout the school, most pupils have a basic understanding and recall of a few Welsh words and phrases. However, they use them hesitantly and often struggle when spoken to in Welsh outside of Welsh sessions. By Year 2, a majority use a suitable range of simple sentences. For example, they greet others and ask them how they are feeling. By Year 6, pupils' Welsh language skills are under-developed. They struggle to recall basic sentence patterns and are not confident enough to hold a simple conversation with one another.

Pupils in the younger classes develop their digital skills effectively and this helps enhance their learning across the curriculum. For example, they use the language of coding to 'programme a person' by telling them to move forwards, backwards and turn. Pupils in Year 3 create animations to re-tell a story. By Year 6, most pupils use the internet to search for information and create simple presentations and short films based on their research. However, very few pupils understand spreadsheets and databases and therefore do not use these important areas of information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning across the curriculum.

Across the school, many pupils enjoy the opportunity to express their ideas through art. Younger pupils enjoy making clay models of a dragon's eye and experimenting with natural materials. Year 5 pupils create art from plastics and recycled materials inspired by the artist Tony Cragg. From a young age, pupils develop their understanding of musical composition across the school successfully.

Most pupils enjoy opportunities to develop their physical skills. The youngest pupils demonstrate high levels of curiosity when exploring outdoors and navigating a track in the outdoor area on their tricycles. Pupils in Year 4 begin to use their problem-solving skills when they investigate how to move when catching a ball. They identify that control, accuracy and position are important when throwing and catching.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

The relationships between nearly all adults and pupils across the school are positive and nurturing. Overall, pupils feel safe and know who to go to if they have a problem. This helps give them confidence when talking to adults and visitors. Many pupils behave well in school and are kind and respectful to adults and other pupils. Nearly all pupils behave appropriately in classes. However, a minority of older pupils do not behave sensibly when moving around the school and during lunchtimes in the dining hall. On a few occasions, the standard of behaviour by a very few pupils is poor, and adults do not always address this behaviour well enough.

Many pupils know how to keep fit and healthy. They explain the benefits of eating a balanced diet, staying hydrated and the importance of regular exercise. However, a minority of pupils eat unhealthy snacks and drink fizzy drinks at breaktimes. Many pupils demonstrate a sound understanding of children's rights, diversity, and sustainability issues. For example, pupils talk confidently about world issues such as pollution and deforestation. Nearly all pupils know how to stay safe online. Older pupils know how to keep their personal information such as passwords safe, understand the dangers of using social media and know not to talk to strangers online.

A few pupils develop their leadership skills and take on responsible roles as school councillors or members of Criw Cymraeg. The school councillors take their work very seriously and help to improve the school by raising suggestions from their peers with members of staff. For example, they organise fundraising activities to raise money towards the purchase of goal posts.

Most pupils work well together in groups. They listen carefully to the ideas of their peers and make worthwhile contributions during lessons. For example, they consider and discuss thoughtfully the difficulties encountered by refugees when leaving their homeland. Nearly all pupils in nursery and reception fully engage in their learning and participate in activities with enthusiasm. Although the majority of older pupils listen well in lessons and contribute eagerly, a minority lose interest during the lessons and say that the work is too easy.

Pupils have a few opportunities to influence what and how they learn, and they appreciate that their ideas are sometimes planned into lessons. Many older pupils are keen to challenge themselves when selecting their tasks and work conscientiously to complete them. However, often the tasks do not offer enough challenge and, as a result, pupils do not make as much progress as they could during the lessons.

Overall, as the pupils move through the school, their independent learning skills are limited, and they learn to become over-reliant on adult support. Many pupils understand the importance of feedback from adults and their peers and can make

suggestions about how they could improve their presentation of their work when asked. However, overall, they have little understanding of how to evaluate the quality of their work and, as a result, they are unclear about their next steps in learning.

Pupils' rates of attendance continue to be a concern and remain well below pre-pandemic levels.

## **Teaching and learning experiences**

The school has a clear vision for the development of the curriculum and has begun to explore approaches to the planning and delivery of the Curriculum for Wales. However, the school's curriculum rollout is still in the early stages of development and the current curriculum does not build on pupils' previous learning experiences coherently and ensure the progressive development of their skills over time. Overall, teaching and learning experiences for pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 are not effective enough.

The curriculum and teaching in nursery and reception meets the needs of pupils well and supports them to make strong progress, often from low starting points. Staff have a secure understanding of the needs and interests of these pupils and use this information purposefully to organise their provision and to plan learning experiences. Provision to develop younger pupils' personal and social, language and communication, numeracy and digital skills is effective. Teachers and support staff support learning skilfully in these classes through a well-balanced combination of focused teaching and opportunities to play and learn through experiences. Resources, tasks, and the learning environment engage and sustain pupils' interest well. Staff utilise the outdoors successfully, for example to support pupils' physical development.

Across the school, the curriculum provides some interesting topics, and teachers seek out a few valuable opportunities to enrich educational experiences. For example, a local charity came to speak to the pupils about climate change. A variety of trips enhance learning experiences successfully. For instance, older pupils visited a local electrical centre during their 'rise of technology' topic and younger pupils visited St Fagan's Museum to raise their awareness of local history. Weekly forest school sessions provide all pupils with a valuable opportunity to access the outdoors and study their natural environment.

Across the school, staff establish and maintain positive working relationships with pupils. Teachers plan appropriately for the development of pupils' extended writing and mathematical skills as part of specific literacy and maths lessons. They develop pupils' digital skills suitably, although their coverage of the curriculum is inconsistent and important aspects, such as the use of spreadsheets and databases, are missing. Overall, teachers plan too few opportunities for pupils to progressively develop and use their writing, numeracy, and digital skills across the curriculum. As a result, pupils do not improve and apply these skills well enough.

Teachers provide a few opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the cultural, linguistic, and diverse nature of Wales. For example, weekly Welsh assemblies and the school Eisteddfod help pupils develop their appreciation of Welsh traditions. However, the school does not plan well for the

structured development of pupils' Welsh oracy skills. As a result, most pupils do not make enough progress in developing their communication skills in Welsh.

In general, the quality of teaching varies too much across the school and a majority of sessions are characterised by low expectations for pupils' progress. Too much time is spent on low level activities such as cutting and sticking. These activities fill time, lack purpose, and do little to motivate pupils or to move them on in their learning. In a majority of classes, teachers structure sessions and guide learning too much, causing pupils to become over-reliant on instructions and support from adults. Teachers fail to challenge pupils consistently, which prevents pupils from making the progress of which they are capable. Throughout the school, many teachers do not adapt activities well enough to meet the needs of all pupils.

Written and verbal feedback is often overly positive and does not support pupils to improve. A minority of teachers use questioning appropriately, for example as part of their introduction to lessons. However, they do not always use questioning well enough to deepen or extend learning. Overall, teachers are not consistently clear about what they want pupils to learn. Current arrangements to organise learning experiences and to develop pupils as independent learners are not working well. As a result, pupils across the ability range from Year 3 to Year 6 do not make the progress they are capable of making.

Most support staff deliver a range of appropriate support for those pupils identified as having additional learning needs. These lessons are beneficial for most pupils and support them in accessing the curriculum as well as their well-being. Teachers plan appropriate activities well in the resource base and have a sound understanding of pupils' needs. They provide a range of authentic learning experiences to develop pupils' skills and knowledge. For example, they visit a local park to develop their communication skills and bake biscuits to develop their collaborative skills. Teachers also plan opportunities for the older pupils to be integrated into mainstream. This is beneficial and helps with their transition to secondary education. However, the school does not share the effective practice of resource base staff in supporting pupils with ALN with staff in mainstream classes.

### **Care, support and guidance**

Staff place a high priority on the well-being of pupils and provide worthwhile additional support and interventions for pupils' emotional and social development. The school, including the specialist resource base, has effective systems in place to identify and meet the needs of pupils with ALN, which includes a variety of purposeful support programmes. The school provides effective learning development plans that include relevant information and appropriate targets to move pupils forward in their learning. These plans are reviewed regularly with pupils, teachers and parents. As a result, many pupils with additional needs make good progress from their starting points. The school works effectively with a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils are supported appropriately.

Staff ensure that pupils consider moral values such as trust, honesty and respect through whole-school and class assemblies. However, these sessions do not always provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual understanding and beliefs. Staff support pupils in a positive manner to develop an awareness of



right and wrong. However, their use of rewards and sanctions is inconsistent and irregular, and they do not always acknowledge or deal with inappropriate behaviour effectively enough. Staff encourage pupils to take on leadership roles in the school, although these opportunities are limited to two groups.

The school identifies appropriate opportunities to reflect on issues around equality, diversity, and inclusion. For example, pupils learn about celebrations in different cultures, such as Diwali, St Dwynwen's Day and Eid. Staff encourage pupils to listen and empathise with the views of others. This helps pupils understand the needs and rights of others as members of a diverse world. For example, whilst learning about the plights of refugees, pupils considered the difficulties people encounter when forced to leave their home country.

The school provides relevant opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding and appreciation of their culture and heritage. Teachers plan purposeful activities linked to Welsh traditions including Welsh Week and the annual Eisteddfod. However, the school does not make use of parents and the local community to make comparisons with other cultures and traditions well enough.

The school provides regular opportunities for pupils to undertake physical activity sessions as part of the curriculum. However, there are very limited opportunities for pupils to take part in extracurricular activities, including sports clubs. The school encourages pupils to bring water and healthy snacks each day, and as a result many pupils are developing their understanding of healthy eating. However, a minority of pupils do not comply with this policy.

Overall, the school has an appropriate culture of safeguarding, although inspectors did identify a few safeguarding issues during the inspection. The school works with the local authority education welfare service to address attendance issues and contacts parents weekly when absenteeism is unexplained or regular. However, the school's systems to effectively monitor and improve attendance are underdeveloped and rates of attendance are too low.

## **Leadership and management**

The school lacks a stable and effective leadership structure. The instability in leadership has hampered the school's ability to make improvements in many important areas, such as in addressing the variable quality of teaching. This has impacted negatively on the progress that pupils make and their overall standards. This is particularly the case with pupils' writing, and their numeracy, Welsh language and digital skills.

Staff ensure a caring and inclusive environment that focuses effectively on the well-being of pupils and ensures that they feel safe. However, there is not a clear enough strategic vision for teaching and learning that is understood by all staff. Leaders have not shared high enough expectations with staff in relation to the quality of teaching and learning or the provision of skills. As a result, over time, leaders have not secured improvements in important aspects of the school's work.

The school's processes for monitoring, evaluating and improving its work are underdeveloped. Although a minority of staff have recently been involved in this

process, generally these activities do not involve a sufficiently wide range of staff. Evaluations of monitoring do not influence the school improvement plan well enough and school priorities are decided upon without input from staff. Consequently, not all staff have a true picture of the school's strengths and its priorities for improvement. Self-evaluation lacks accuracy and rigour and this gives the school an over-generous view of pupil progress and the quality of teaching. As a result, school improvement activities have had a limited impact on improving teachers' approaches to curriculum design, the quality of teaching or staff expectations of what pupils can achieve.

The school provides a suitable range of professional learning for staff. However, these do not link sufficiently with whole-school priorities. Opportunities to observe and share good practice within the school and in other schools, are limited. To support the school's plans to implement the Curriculum for Wales, the curriculum lead has visited other schools as part of the Cardiff Commitment project. However, leaders have not ensured sufficient time for staff to implement and sustain improvements across the school, or targeted professional development well enough. Staff roles and responsibilities are unclear and performance management systems are not in place. Leaders do not hold staff to account sufficiently or ensure that they develop staff skills to improve outcomes for pupils.

Leaders are addressing the requirements of Welsh Government's ALN reform act, successfully. However, the school does not address other national priorities well enough, such as improving pupils' skills in Welsh. The school's progress towards implementing the Curriculum for Wales is limited and still at a very early stage of development. Leaders have not ensured a shared vision or strategic direction for the curriculum. It does not include a progressive framework for the coherent development of pupils' skills over time.

Governors are enthusiastic about their role and keen to support the school. They have a good understanding of the school's finances and how to manage the budget. They have successfully recovered a deficit budget over recent years. They know how leaders use the pupil development grant and its impact on supporting vulnerable pupils with their emotional development. However, low attendance at meetings and recent resignations from the governing body mean that they have not always had sufficient numbers to carry out their statutory duties successfully. For example, they have not ensured that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Governors are too reliant on leaders' views about the school's strengths and areas for development, which are not always accurate. This means that they are unable to challenge the school robustly enough and are unaware of the true picture of pupils' progress or issues with the quality of teaching.

Many parents appreciate the support and guidance the pupils receive from staff. However, the communication they receive is inconsistent, and often important messages are not communicated in a timely enough manner. Leaders do not have an effective overview of attendance and do not plan for improvement in this area.

## 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](http://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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