



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

A report on

Penarlag C.P. School

**Carlines Avenue
Carlines Park
Ewloe
Flintshire
CH5 3RQ**

Date of inspection: December 2023

by

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

About Penarlag C.P. School

Name of provider	Penarlag C.P. School
Local authority	Flintshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	197
Pupils of statutory school age	160
Number in nursery classes	15
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 23.7%)	17.2%
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 13.2%)	6.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	3.1%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	7.5%
Date of headteacher appointment	02/01/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	23/06/2015
Start date of inspection	04/12/2023

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

Pupils who attend Penarlag Primary school receive a high level of care, support and respect. Pupils are proud of their school and speak highly of the experiences they have. Across the school, pupils are friendly, welcoming, and behave well. They have good manners, are polite and inquisitive and enjoy learning new things. They develop valuable relationships with their peers and staff, which have a positive impact on their learning and well-being.

Most pupils begin school with skills that are appropriate for their age. As they move through the school, most pupils make strong progress in their learning and do so with confidence and enjoyment. Pupils with additional learning needs benefit from valuable support, and as result they also make good progress by the time they leave the school. Staff make skilful use of the learning spaces both within and outside of their classrooms to develop pupils' independence and to provide them with opportunities to carry out interesting practical activities.

The headteacher and governors work together well to ensure that pupils are safe and happy in school. Generally, leaders identify what the school is doing well and what it needs to do to improve. They take suitable steps to make the improvements needed. However, the school has not yet developed a curriculum that enables pupils to make constructive links between their own lives and their learning. Staff have not been given enough opportunities to undertake professional learning to support curriculum development and are not empowered to lead the necessary improvements themselves.

During their time at Penarlag, most pupils gain good Welsh, digital, literacy and mathematical skills and they learn to use these well in a range of contexts. The school has a clear Welsh identity. Throughout the school, staff model the Welsh language passionately and it has a high profile in many aspects of the school's work. The Criw Cymraeg pupil group plays an integral part in the school's Welsh language provision and a good range of other groups enable pupils to positively influence the life of the school.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen distributed leadership to develop a coherent and progressive approach to curriculum and assessment
- R2 Ensure that professional learning is strategically planned to meet the needs of the school's immediate improvement priorities

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils enter the school with the skills and knowledge expected for their age. Most pupils, including those with additional needs, make good progress in their learning as they move through the school. There is no notable difference between the progress made by pupils who are eligible for free school meals and their peers. Most pupils who arrive at the school with little or no English make at least good progress from their starting points.

As they move through the school, most pupils develop their speaking and listening skills effectively. By Year 6, most pupils are confident and articulate speakers who listen well to each other and adults. Most pupils across the school readily initiate conversations and talk confidently about their learning experiences. Most pupils express their opinions effectively, using a good range of vocabulary, which becomes increasingly sophisticated.

Most pupils make strong progress in the development of their reading skills. Many younger pupils speak excitedly about characters in books they enjoy. By the end of Year 2, most pupils use decoding skills and context cues successfully to read unfamiliar words and understand their meaning. As they move through the school, most pupils read with increasing fluency and expression. They take appropriate notice of punctuation and grammar when reading aloud and they skim and scan text to elicit key pieces of information.

Most pupils make good progress in writing whilst developing useful organisational and presentation skills. Most younger pupils develop their mark making and emergent writing skills effectively. As they move through the younger classes, they begin to write simple words correctly and use their knowledge of letters and sounds well to make sensible attempts at spelling unfamiliar words. Having been visited by a barn owl, younger pupils write interesting factual reports and impressive letters to a local artist. Most older pupils use their writing skills effectively across the curriculum and for different purposes. For example, Year 6 pupils plan, draft and revise their work beneficially when writing evacuee diaries.

Most pupils make strong progress in developing their mathematical skills. As they move through the school, they build on their knowledge of number and calculation to solve increasingly difficult problems using more complicated numbers. Most pupils develop a strong understanding of shape, space and measure by the time they leave the school. Overall, pupils are confident in applying the skills they have learnt when solving problems in other areas of the curriculum. Younger pupils sort leaves accurately using a Venn diagram and make sensible estimations about the weight of objects being carried on a witch's broom. Older pupils use their measuring skills well when drawing a scale version of William Gladstone's library onto the yard and accurately calculate fractions to help them make Victorian gruel.

Most pupils use their digital skills confidently as part of their learning. Across the school, most pupils save and retrieve their work and upload their learning to digital platforms confidently. Most younger pupils successfully code programmable toys to

create a sequence of moves and create a route around the landmarks of London. Most older pupils use an online design package skilfully to create images of Anderson shelters as part of their work on the second world war.

Throughout the school, most pupils develop their Welsh speaking skills successfully. Most pupils display pride in their Welsh language skills and enjoy the opportunities they have to develop and apply them further. Most pupils greet visitors through the medium of Welsh and ask and answer questions appropriately. They understand simple Welsh language instructions and follow them routinely throughout the school day. Most younger pupils use Welsh around their classrooms without prompting from their teachers. For example, they use Welsh confidently when communicating with each other in the Christmas and bakery role play areas. Older pupils apply their Welsh language skills well across the curriculum, for example when role-playing conversations between political figures and discussing the features of two- and three-dimensional shapes.

Most pupils throughout the school develop their creative and physical skills purposefully. Younger pupils use pastels carefully to create intricate images of the local area in the style of Van Gogh's Starry Night. Whilst learning about the events and impact of the Second World War, older pupils thoughtfully create expressive movements in response to poetry about the Blitz in Swansea.

Most pupils develop as effective thinkers and problem solvers during their time at the school. Many younger pupils enjoy opportunities to guide their own learning and work independently. Younger pupils show good perseverance when testing different materials to build a boat to save their belongings from the Great Fire of London. Most older pupils develop valuable collaborative skills and use them well to create, film and evaluate dramatic scenes from Oliver Twist.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

During their time at school, most pupils develop positive working relationships with staff. They benefit greatly from the warm, caring, and supportive relationships they form with staff and each other. Most pupils develop respectful friendships and demonstrate these well during lessons and at lunch and break times. Most pupils enjoy their time at school and are proud to be members of the Penarlag school community.

Most pupils have a clear understanding of the school's expectations of behaviour in the classroom and around the school. They behave consistently well and are polite, courteous, and welcoming to visitors at the school. They are keen to join in conversations and talk excitedly about their learning and things that are important to them.

Across the school, most pupils listen attentively and participate well in lessons and activities. They collaborate successfully in groups and in pairs and many make positive contributions to class discussions. For example, younger pupils excitedly share their knowledge of The Great Fire of London and the impact this had on people and buildings at the time.

Most pupils complete tasks and activities well. They have pride in their work and a positive attitude to learning. Most pupils settle to their tasks quickly and engage well in lessons and activities. They participate happily in lessons and activities and develop good levels of stamina and perseverance, which supports them to reach their learning goals. As a result, across the school, most pupils are developing as capable learners.

Pupils generally appreciate the feedback they get from teachers during lessons. This feedback helps them make improvements and address any mistakes or misconceptions. Teachers give pupils clear objectives for learning, which help them know what they need to do and what they are learning. Pupils use success criteria effectively, for example to identify aspects they need to include when writing a story. Older pupils have suitable opportunities to help their peers to reflect on their learning and find potential corrections. They are beginning to use strategies that support them to reflect on their own learning and identify ways they can improve their work, especially in their writing.

Many pupils take an active part in the life of the school and take on beneficial leadership roles through a range of pupil groups. Representatives take on these roles seriously and conscientiously and make a valuable contribution to the life of the school. For example, The Criw Cymraeg successfully encourage the use of Welsh around the school and in lessons.

Pupils learn how to be healthy and confident and understand how diet, physical activity, and mental health impact on their quality of life. Nearly all pupils enjoy the opportunity to be active at play and lunch times. Older pupils appreciate participating in after-school clubs when these are available, to further develop their physical and creative skills. Across the school, pupils develop a valuable understanding of how to stay safe online, keeping their personal details private and talking to a trusted adult if issues arise.

Pupils have a growing awareness of their roles as responsible citizens. They actively influence their own lives and the lives of others in their community and beyond, through participating in a range of worthwhile fundraising activities. These help to support pupils to understand the plight of those less fortunate than themselves and develop as informed and ethical citizens. For example, pupils fill shoeboxes with toys and stationery to send to children who may not receive a present at Christmas time.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school's hard-working, dedicated and professional staff team work together passionately to benefit their pupils. Staff across the school pride themselves on developing strong working relationships with pupils. They foster a valuable culture of respect and trust where most pupils feel valued. This creates a purposeful environment for learning and, as a result, most pupils settle quickly to their work and behave well in lessons.

Most teachers explain tasks clearly to pupils, so that they understand what to do and how to do it. Teachers manage their time during lessons well to check pupils' understanding. They use questioning constructively to help pupils explain their thinking and learning. Teachers use success criteria appropriately, which supports

pupils to organise and evaluate their own work. As a result, most pupils understand what they have done well and what they need to improve. In younger classes, teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to consolidate and deepen their learning through well-planned areas of provision within, and outside, the classroom. Teachers of older pupils also make good use of the school's learning environment. They provide useful spaces for pupils to complete their practical activities in small groups and pairs and have high expectations for pupils' independence.

Teachers use a range of assessments suitably to monitor pupils' progress and identify those pupils who may need additional support. Pupils requiring additional support are monitored and evaluated closely to ensure that they make appropriate progress. However, teachers do not always use ongoing assessment and information well enough to plan for pupils' next steps in learning at a swift enough pace. Teachers focus too closely on a narrow field of learning in their assessment and, as a result, across the school, leaders and teachers do not have a clear enough idea of the progress pupils make over time.

The school has based its curriculum around topics that cover the areas of learning and experience in Curriculum for Wales. Area leads provide teachers with useful information to help them with their termly plans. Individual teachers plan activities that focus on the development and application of pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills through the agreed topics. However, there is not an overall plan for the teaching and progression of all skills across the school and the whole curriculum to ensure that pupils build on their knowledge and understanding over time. The school has not considered well enough how the areas of learning and experience work together cohesively to ensure that there is a holistic approach to curriculum design. As a result, pupils do not make relevant links to their own lives and their community in their learning.

The school plans interesting visits and invites visitors to the school to enhance pupils' learning. For example, a local science and technology employer provides STEM workshops and pupils have learned life-saving skills and forms of martial arts from local trainers. These experiences provide pupils with exciting stimuli and valuable enrichment in a few aspects of their learning. The provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is systematic and successful. Most staff are effective role models for the Welsh language. They use a variety of greetings and instructions and provide encouraging praise to pupils when they use Welsh in their lessons.

Reports to parents give suitable information about their child's progress along with improvement targets for the future. The school gives parents appropriate opportunities to discuss their child's learning throughout the year. However, the information shared does not give parents a clear or frequent enough understanding of the progress their child makes.

Care, support and guidance

Throughout the school, staff have established a calm, inclusive and safe learning environment. Teachers and support staff consistently model positive behaviour, attitudes and language through their exchanges with pupils and each other. Relationships between staff and pupils are particularly strong. All pupils are treated

fairly, equally and with respect. As a result, most pupils feel happy and safe in school, behave consistently well and are ready to learn.

The school's provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is good. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) provides strong guidance and leadership. Interventions and support programmes are well-considered and delivered skilfully. Daily evaluations are used impressively to identify the progress pupils are making and the next steps in their learning. Valuable and regular communication between the ALNCo and teaching assistants ensures that adaptations to support are made swiftly. As a result of this rigorous work, most pupils with ALN make good progress from their starting points. The school makes worthwhile provision for meeting pupils' well-being needs. All staff are sensitive to pupils' needs and daily 'check-ins' enable them to swiftly address any worries pupils have. A few support staff have received specific training, which enables them to lead beneficial well-being programmes and provide timely support as and when pupils need it.

The school provides a good range of opportunities for pupils to influence their experiences at school. Pupil leadership groups are plentiful, active and efficiently organised. They enable pupils from across the school to express their views about the school's provision. Pupil leaders are a strong feature of the school and represent their school effectively and with pride. They talk confidently about their roles and share their thoughts and ideas maturely. Recently, the Ciriw Cymraeg has led work to promote the use of the Welsh language across the school successfully. Pupils lead fundraising events, run eco-projects and produce videos to promote their work to the school community.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is sound. Across the school, pupils have a good range of opportunities to be involved in the arts such as through drama activities in class, Christmas and end of year productions and through good provision for art within the curriculum. A local church group regularly leads assemblies and pupils learn about a suitable range of religious, moral and global issues as they move through the school. The school has developed appropriate opportunities for pupils to understand what makes a healthy relationship and about the dangers of radicalisation and exploitation. The local Police Community Support Officer supports the school through useful sessions on a range of relevant matters such as cyber bullying and anti-social behaviour.

The school has a beneficial anti-bullying culture. Whilst incidents of bullying are infrequent, there are effective systems in place to ensure that any concerns are managed appropriately. Most pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe online. All staff and a designated governor receive appropriate levels of safeguarding training. The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and give no cause for concern. Systems to monitor and improve attendance are comprehensive. In instances of non-attendance, the school contacts parents in a timely manner and works constructively with the local authority attendance officer to provide support to families who need it.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders and the governing body have worked together well to create a vibrant school environment that promotes inclusion, equality and pupils' well-being

successfully. The headteacher leads the school efficiently. She is ably assisted by the deputy headteacher, whose work as ALNCo is strong.

Middle leaders work diligently on their designated areas of responsibility and are beginning to impact positively on a few aspects of the school's provision. For example, strong leadership of Welsh has ensured that the language has a high profile in the school and both staff and pupils use it purposefully and enthusiastically. However, leaders do not use the knowledge and skills of middle leaders well enough to design and influence the school's curriculum successfully. As a result, the development of the school's curriculum is restricted and it does not support pupils' learning experiences well enough. Leaders and staff use a limited range of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress and this hampers staff in planning for and evaluating pupils' learning. Termly pupil progress meetings are useful in facilitating discussion about pupils' learning and their support needs. However, the school's overall approach to assessment is too narrow. The school's over-reliance on test data, and underdevelopment of formative assessment, does not enable staff to establish the progress that pupils make swiftly or well enough.

Leaders use a range of self-evaluation activities suitably to identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Findings are accurate in the main and improvement priorities are a fair reflection of the school's current needs. The involvement of governors and wider staff in self-evaluation supports a positive culture of shared responsibility for the school's efforts to improve provision and pupils' progress. There are suitable performance management processes that link appropriately to the school's priorities.

Staff have limited opportunities to engage in valuable professional learning. All staff receive appropriate levels of safeguarding and Prevent training, and a few have gained qualifications in leading well-being programmes. In a few cases, middle leaders work with cluster and regional colleagues to develop specific elements of the curriculum such as science and technology. However, professional learning does not have a high enough profile in the school. Opportunities for staff to develop their knowledge and skills in relation to strong and effective curriculum and assessment practice are insufficient.

Governors are highly supportive and are active participants in the life of the school. They gain relevant first-hand knowledge of the school's work through joining staff in carrying out learning walks, work scrutiny and listening to learners. This helps them to ask appropriate questions of the school's leaders and hold them to account for the actions they have taken. Governors are proud of the role that they play in facilitating the school's involvement in community events. Governors support school leaders well in establishing a strong culture of safeguarding and they have good oversight of the school's arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances, including the pupil development grant, suitably to provide learning support, purchase resources and fund school improvement initiatives. However, opportunities for pupils to extend and enrich their learning experiences through after-school clubs are limited. The very few clubs that do take place require payment and this restricts the ability of pupils from deprived backgrounds from attending. Teachers and support staff make excellent use of the school building. They ensure that every available space is utilised

constructively to encourage and develop pupils' independent skills, facilitate collaboration and provide additional support and challenge.

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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