



## Report summary for parents and carers on Ystrad Mynach Primary

**Date of inspection: November 2023**

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

# Evaluation

Pupils' well-being is at the heart of Ystrad Mynach Primary school. Leaders and staff work diligently to ensure that the school is a compassionate and inclusive environment where all pupils can succeed. The care, support and well-being they provide is highly effective, underpins the school's vision and supports pupils to make good progress. The school is a calm and happy community, where staff and pupils show a high level of respect for each other. Pupils enjoy school and understand the importance of attending. They are eager to respond to adults and proud of their school, and appreciate the wide variety of opportunities that support them to learn and make progress. Overall, pupils feel safe and well cared for and trust that adults will always support them through difficult times.

Teachers think carefully about how pupils learn best and use a range of approaches to engage them successfully in their learning. A strength of the school is how staff regularly review and develop their professional skills and knowledge together. This helps them to adjust the school's provision to meet the needs of individual pupils and to implement new initiatives and priorities. For example, the way that leaders work with staff to address the requirements of Welsh Government's Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reforms is exceptional.

## Cameo – Developing inclusivity in the classroom

The school's response to ALN reform is highly effective and has a positive impact on learners. Leaders and staff ensure that provision in all year groups is based on current need. There is a flexible and adaptive approach, which ensures that class teachers, who have received bespoke professional learning, are responsible for preparing and delivering high quality learning experiences that meet the needs of all pupils. Person centred outcomes and targets are at the forefront of teachers' decision-making and planning for all learners with ALN.

In most cases, teachers use questioning and feedback effectively to move learning on at a brisk pace. This helps to engage pupils and consolidate their understanding, and supports them to make good progress. From a young age, most pupils make strong progress in their reading, writing and numeracy skills and learn to apply these skills successfully in their work across the curriculum. Although teachers use Welsh suitably during lessons and around the school, provision to support pupils' development of Welsh oracy skills is inconsistent. As a result, most pupils lack confidence to use Welsh to speak to each other in everyday situations.

Most pupils enjoy being physically active and learning outdoors. For example, 'Rucksack' sessions allow pupils to experience and appreciate nature through extended and uninterrupted periods of outdoor learning. Most pupils use digital resources creatively to support their learning and enhance their work. For example, older pupils use coding to create a pedometer to trial in the playground. Most pupils are keen to do well and to take on new challenges. However, at times, staff over-direct activities, and this limits the opportunities for pupils to take ownership of their learning and to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills independently.

The school's 'Flourish' curriculum is well embedded and highly effective, and inspires pupils to raise their aspirations. It provides them with beneficial opportunities to learn about their community, local area and the wider world. Teachers capture pupils' interest by skilfully involving them in the planning of learning experiences and the sharing of learning with parents through 'wow weeks'. Pupils learn about the diverse nature of society and become ethically aware, with older pupils using vocabulary such as 'diversity', 'equity' and 'inclusivity', knowledgeably during useful, well-crafted classroom debates. Staff foster the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, and social skills thoughtfully. Through regular assemblies, pupils have valuable opportunities to reflect on values, such as compassion and empathy. In particular, the curriculum focuses well on developing pupils' self-esteem. This successfully supports the transition of older pupils to high school.

#### **Cameo – Building pupils' resilience and self esteem**

The school's Flourish programme encourages pupils to believe in themselves, and to promote positive thinking and self-esteem. Flourish enables pupils to realise their full potential. It gives the pupils tools and techniques to equip and empower themselves to believe that they can dream big dreams.

The school values the opinions of pupils. The many pupil leadership groups work alongside school leaders to bring about improvements. For example, the 'Maths Magicians' created a video tutorial for younger pupils to assist them with numeracy. The pupil groups help them to develop their leadership skills and take on responsibility, and promotes their self-esteem.

Robust and considerate leadership in the school has led to the creation of a caring ethos, strong teamwork and exciting learning experiences for pupils. Leaders invest in staff and build leadership capacity effectively across the school, resulting in a passionate team of professionals with a strong understanding of the needs of the pupils and the local community. Leaders and staff are visible and approachable at key moments during the school day to listen and chat to parents. Close collaboration with other schools supports a shared approach to the curriculum and aids transition. The school works successfully as a lead school for initial teacher education, supporting the development of future teachers.

School governors have a significant range of professional expertise and contribute well to school life and to its place within the community. They offer the right balance of support and challenge, for instance when discussing issues such as pupil and staff well-being and matters of finance. For example, they fund enrichment experiences so that pupils affected by poverty and disadvantage do not miss out.

# Recommendations and next steps

We have made 2 recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Provide opportunities for pupils to take ownership of their learning and to develop their thinking and problem solving skills independently**
- R2 Improve pupils' Welsh oracy skills**

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

## Statutory compliance

### **Safeguarding arrangements**

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

### **Healthy eating and drinking**

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

### **School finances**

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including use of the pupil development grant.

### **Health and safety (site security)**

The school's arrangements for site security do not give any cause for concern.

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Publication date: 25/01/2024

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