



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

A report on

Sandfields Primary School

**Lilian Street
Port Talbot
SA12 6AJ**

Date of inspection: February 2024

by

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

About Sandfields Primary School

Name of provider	Sandfields Primary School
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	295
Pupils of statutory school age	234
Number in nursery classes	32
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%)	64.8%
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%)	25.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	13.2%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	07/12/2015
Start date of inspection	19/02/2024

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

The staff in Sandfields Primary School create a warm, friendly, and inclusive environment with the pupils' well-being at its heart. Nearly all pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. They feel that they are looked after extremely well and are kept safe. Most pupils show respect to all staff and visitors and show concern and care for each other. Pupils' behaviour across the school is very good.

The school's provision to support pupils' emotional and social challenges is a strength. Effective programmes help pupils to engage in school life and enable them to access their lessons successfully. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and contribute well to what and how they learn.

Teachers are developing a creative curriculum for pupils to build on their knowledge and to deepen their understanding of their locality and wider area. They provide beneficial life experiences for the pupils and engage them well in their learning. However, in class, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low, particularly for more able pupils. Furthermore, over-direction from adults impacts on pupils' ability to develop as independent learners. Although staff praise pupils for their achievements regularly, written feedback does not help pupils to improve their work. In addition, there are limited opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own, and each other's learning.

From low starting points, many pupils develop clear speaking skills and listen carefully. They have a sound understanding of number and are beginning to apply their numeracy skills in other areas of learning suitably. However, pupils' ability to write at length is underdeveloped and pace of development in their digital skills is slow.

The headteacher, staff and governors work together effectively. Overall, they have good understanding of many of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. However, their work to evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and learning is not effective enough.

Recommendations

- R1 Sharpen self-evaluation and improvement processes so that they impact more positively on the quality of teaching and learning
- R2 Improve pupils' writing and digital skills
- R3 Raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly the more able
- R4 Ensure that the quality of feedback from teachers targets the next steps in pupils' learning and that pupils have suitable opportunities to improve their work

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will work with the local authority to review the school's progress.

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils start at the school with communication and mathematical skills below those expected for their age. During their time at the school, many pupils make suitable progress from their starting points. This includes those who have English as an additional language and those that are eligible for free school meals. Many pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make sufficient progress against their targets. However, the more able pupils do not achieve well enough.

Many younger pupils make good progress in their oracy skills from their low starting points. They talk readily about how they made their mud pies in the forest area and are happy to talk about their visit to a restaurant. Most pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 talk enthusiastically about their learning, particularly how they have offered suggestions to improve the local beach facilities. As they progress through the school, many pupils listen well and respond confidently to questions. Many older pupils use a wide range of relevant vocabulary in their explanations.

Many pupils make appropriate progress in developing their Welsh language skills. They are beginning to use simple Welsh vocabulary and phrases correctly and respond enthusiastically to questioning during short, daily sessions. Very few pupils use the Welsh language informally around the school.

Through a variety of practical activities, many pupils from the Nursery class to Year 2 develop their knowledge of letter sounds. They grow in confidence and begin to make a steady progress in developing their reading skills. They thoroughly enjoy listening to stories and are beginning to sequence a story with adult support. By Year 3, the majority of pupils read simple texts accurately. Overall, pupils develop a range of strategies to help them read with understanding. As they progress through the school, the majority of pupils apply their reading skills competently to retrieve information to create a presentation on pollution, for example. However, pupils' enjoyment of reading and their knowledge of a range of authors are less well developed.

In the Nursery class, pupils begin to experiment with making marks and forming letters well. Many pupils in Years 1 and 2 build on these skills appropriately to write words and construct sentences, using their knowledge of sounds and letters to write familiar words. From Year 3 to Year 6, many pupils are beginning to consider the audience and, when given the opportunity, choose purposeful words and descriptive language, for example to recount the experiences of a refugee. Most older pupils are developing a sound understanding of the different styles of writing and produce

creative short stories. However, in general, the range and quality of pupils' writing across the school are limited. Across the school, most pupils do not produce pieces of writing of good quality. The overuse of worksheets and over-direction by adults impact on pupils' ability to write independently and at length.

Many pupils make appropriate progress in developing their mathematics skills. In the Nursery class, pupils recognise numbers up to ten correctly. As pupils move from Reception to Year 2, they develop simple strategies to solve problems and use a limited range of mathematical language to explain their solutions and a very few count and order numbers to a hundred confidently. In addition, they construct simple bar charts and retrieve information from them correctly. From Year 3 to Year 6, most pupils develop sound methods of calculation and apply these to discrete number activities. In Year 6, they calculate angles and the perimeter of regular and compound shapes well. Overall, many pupils do not always make the progress they could in developing their data handling skills or in learning about other mathematical concepts, such as shape and space. They are beginning to apply their numeracy skills in other areas of learning purposefully.

Many pupils from Nursery to Year 2 develop their digital skills suitably to help support their learning. The older pupils apply their skills, for example to combine text and images to present information or use simple charts to record information suitably. On the whole, pupil progress from Year 3 to Year 6 is slow. They are beginning to create their own movies and simple databases about their families. However, pupils do not develop skills further and their understanding and application of important areas of information and communication technology, such as using coding programmes and compiling and using spreadsheets, are underdeveloped.

Most pupils develop purposeful creative skills as they move through the school. They develop a good range of techniques to create drawings of fireworks and to use natural resources from the local environment to create a lion's face with sticks in the Reception class. Many pupils develop their confidence and engage enthusiastically when singing in the choir and learning musical instruments. Most pupils develop physical skills with increasing confidence and participate enthusiastically in lessons. Overall, most pupils' thinking and problem-solving skills are not as well developed.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils enjoy attending school and appreciate the care and nurture that staff provide for them. They have a sound awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe, including online. The respect most pupils show each other, staff and visitors is a strong feature of the school. They collaborate well during lessons and play together harmoniously during break and lunchtimes. Most pupils' behaviour is very good.

Most pupils believe that all adults in the school listen to their views and take them into account when considering decisions that affect them. They know whom to approach if something is worrying them and recognise the importance of the morning 'check in' session. Pupils take regular advantage of the variety and effective strategies for supporting their emotional and social well-being. As a result, many develop as happy, healthy, and confident individuals.

Nearly all pupils have a positive attitude to learning. They show good levels of interest in their work and give things a try and persevere with a range of activities when given an opportunity. Most pupils concentrate well on their work during lessons. They make positive contributions to discussions and listen carefully to all adults and to the contributions of others when working in pairs or groups. Most pupils contribute effectively to planning activities at the beginning of topics. By doing so, they share what they would like to know and, how they would like to learn. However, pupils do not contribute to improving their work or the work of others to identify their next steps in learning.

Most pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily. They learn about the importance of eating fruit and vegetables in class and enjoy the fruit offered to them at breaktimes. Most pupils take advantage of regular opportunities to develop their physical skills in formal sessions in school and participate in learning activities in the outdoor area. Visitors such as sport coaches and an ex-pupil who has played rugby for Wales contribute effectively to strengthening the pupils' physical skills and their aspirations for the future as a result of seeing one of the school's former pupil's successes.

Many pupils take an active part in the life of the school and the pupil voice groups are inclusive. Their representatives demonstrate a range of purposeful leadership skills. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and are proud of their valuable contributions. Members of the school council make decisions that influence a few aspects of the school's life and work. For example, they have ordered equipment for pupils to keep them active during break and lunchtimes.

Most pupils are developing well as ethical, informed citizens. For example, the older pupils have held a peaceful protest and lobbied to local councillors outside the Council offices in Port Talbot about the vandalised local park. As a result of voicing their opinion, the pupils have shared ideas with the local member of parliament on how to clean up the park to make it a safe and pleasant facility for all. In the process, most pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 learn about the impact of anti-social behaviour successfully and develop a sound understanding of the difference between right and wrong. They are proud of their efforts to support other people in the community.

Rates of school attendance have improved considerably over the last year but remain quite low overall.

Teaching and learning experiences

All the staff build strong working relationships with pupils. As a result, the school's provision for pupils' personal and social education is effective and impacts successfully to create a warm and supportive learning environment. Staff use praise effectively to celebrate pupils' efforts and achievements, and they have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. The mutual respect between staff and pupils, and between pupils and their peers, results in an effective collaboration.

The school is developing a curriculum that reflects the principles of Curriculum for Wales effectively. Recently, leaders and staff have worked with pupils, parents and governors to create a clear vision for their curriculum. Teachers are beginning to plan a range of interesting topics across the areas of learning and experience. Overall,

these capture pupils' interests well and stimulate them to learn. For example, central to the curriculum model is the 'Sandfield's Fantastic Fifty' activities. The 50 activities provide pupils with enriching experiences such as eating in a restaurant and travelling on a train to draw upon for their school-based learning and within the locality. Most teachers from the Nursery to Year 2 classes use the outdoor learning environment suitably. The forest area is used well to provide exciting experiences and has a positive effect on pupils' communication, physical and practical skills.

Teachers organise their classrooms appropriately and create a positive ethos for learning. Where teaching is most effective, teachers give clear explanations in lessons that enable pupils to undertake their work confidently and plan activities that build on previous learning purposefully. However, in classes across the school, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low and adults tend to over-direct lessons, which impacts on pupils' ability to develop their independent learning skills.

Teachers do not always match the level of challenge to pupils' needs well enough. This limits their progress, especially for more able pupils. Written feedback is celebratory, it does not help pupils to know what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve.

The provision for developing pupils' speaking and listening skills is a strong feature of the school. In addition, there are regular opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills but the culture of reading for pleasure is less well developed. Teachers develop pupils' discrete literacy and numeracy skills adequately and, although there are increasing opportunities for them to apply these skills in other areas of their learning, opportunities for pupils to write to a good standard and at length are limited.

Where teaching is most effective, staff model the Welsh language effectively and daily slots help to promote the language suitably. However, the development of the Welsh language in informal situations is less effective. The school's provision to improve pupils' digital skills is adequate. In general, teachers do not plan and deliver activities that challenge pupils well enough, which in turn inhibits their progress over time.

The school has suitable extra-curricular activities that develop pupils' creative and social skills purposefully. For example, many pupils enjoy attending the digital club, where they develop confidence and collaborate with each other successfully. In addition, visitors to the school such as the local member of parliament to enhance the curriculum are beginning to inspire them about future careers. The school makes particularly good use of residential centres, where pupils from Year 6 learn about teamwork while taking part in outdoor activities.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring and inclusive community. There is a close and friendly working relationship between staff and pupils, and this is reflected in the positive attitudes of most pupils towards school and work.

Staff place an extremely high priority on meeting the well-being needs of pupils. Programmes to develop and support pupils' social and emotional needs are

developing effectively and are having a considerable impact. Overall, this strong focus on pupil well-being is a strength of the school.

Throughout the school there is a coherent and consistent approach to behaviour management. The staff have worked closely with the pupils to develop self-control strategies to control their own and their peers' emotions. Further initiatives, such as developing pupils' understanding of how to maintain positive relationships and how to resolve differences, help to ensure that pupils' behaviour is very good.

The provision for all pupils who have been identified with ALN is sound. By considering each pupil's needs, the ALN co-ordinator and staff plan bespoke programmes of support. Teaching assistants engage the pupils well during the wide range of additional literacy sessions that make positive and sustained change to the pupils' ability to access their learning. The school works closely with multiple agencies to provide specific activities and support sessions for pupils and their families.

The school plans a range of activities for pupils to explore their rights as children. Teachers include pupils' own questions and ideas into class discussions, such as exploring how influential young people can become by voicing an opinion. As a result, pupils are beginning to reflect on their own beliefs or values. In addition, the school provides pupils with appropriate opportunities to develop their moral and spiritual understanding through the curriculum and acts of collective worship. However, opportunities to develop the pupils' understanding of diversity and multiculturalism are at an earlier stage of development.

There is a fair representation of pupils across the range of pupil voice groups, which adds to the sense of fairness and equality within the school. These roles support the development of pupils' self-confidence, and they are beginning to help influence the work of the school. For example, the play buddies successfully help develop the confidence and social skills of the younger pupils, which helps them settle into school life quickly.

The school provides suitable opportunities to celebrate and develop pupils' understanding of their identity, heritage and culture. The pupils study key people who contribute to the world of arts and entertainment, such as Branwen Lewis. Welshness is celebrated appropriately by holding an annual eisteddfod on St David's Day and special celebrations, such as Diwrnod Santes Dwynwen.

Staff ensure that there are suitable opportunities to teach the pupils about eating healthily. The school plans well for pupils to understand the importance of being physically active through organised lessons and through visiting sport coaches.

The school creates and maintains a safe environment for all pupils, and leaders have successfully embedded a strong culture of safeguarding, which includes effective site security. Visits from the local police officer develops the pupils' awareness of how to keep themselves safe in the wider community. The school works closely with pupils and their families whose attendance is not good enough and for those who are late in the morning. This is beginning to have a positive impact on improving attendance rates overall.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, senior leaders, staff and governors have good understanding of the needs of the pupils and the local area. The headteacher has worked diligently alongside senior leaders, to create a strong team ethos among staff, while ensuring that the well-being of all pupils is at the heart of everything they do. He provides a purposeful, caring leadership and, with all staff, has created an inclusive culture where all pupils feel safe and secure. Leaders work conscientiously to meet the needs of all pupils and to address social disadvantage. All adults show a high level of commitment to making time in school positive and enjoyable for all.

Leaders work together well and support each other positively. Staff have a sound understanding of their responsibilities and discharge their roles suitably. A particular strength is the way that teaching assistants join with teachers in leading different groups of pupils in their learning. Sound performance management processes are in place and targets link directly with school improvement priorities. Leaders prioritise professional learning for all staff, and these are beginning to have a positive impact on developing staff expertise to improve pupils' well-being and beginning to develop the curriculum.

The school has a range of processes to evaluate its work suitably and the outcomes from these activities form the basis for improvement planning, professional learning for staff and whole-school performance management targets. For example, the school's recent work on improving pupils' well-being has led to the majority of targeted pupils making significant progress. As a result, they are able to access their learning effectively. However, the self-evaluation processes overall are not rigorous enough to identify important areas for improvement in the standards of teaching and learning, such as raising teachers' expectation of what pupils can do.

Leaders implement and refine new initiatives and meet national priorities suitably. The school is developing an exciting curriculum for the pupils and appropriate changes have been made in the provision for ALN pupils. Leaders plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills in formal situations. However, using Welsh informally around the school is not as well developed.

The governing body has a sound understanding of pupils' needs and knows the community that the school serves very well. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and support the school's strategic vision successfully. They are beginning to become involved in many self-evaluation activities and support the headteacher to manage and implement the school's resources well. The governing body monitors the school's finances and challenges leaders regarding financial management and the use of grants carefully. Governors work with school leaders to promote a robust safeguarding culture. They make appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors monitor spending plans and their impact robustly. They allocate grant funding, including the pupil development grant, effectively to support identified pupils' learning and well-being needs. For example, the school has developed the role of a family engagement officer who provides comprehensive support for pupils and their families, and this has made a significant difference to pupils' engagement in school life and learning. In addition, the school uses the pupil

development grant effectively to improve the skills and emotional development of vulnerable pupils and to provide them with experiences that they might not otherwise have.

Leaders are developing positive relationships with the parents and the wider school community to support pupils' learning and well-being effectively. During coffee morning sessions, staff provide training to help parents support their child's well-being and give them opportunities to share their concerns. The school's work with support partnerships is successful.

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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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