



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

A report on

Pontybrenin Primary School

**Glyn Rhosyn
Gorseinon
SA4 6HX**

Date of inspection: March 2024

by

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

About Pontybrenin Primary School

Name of provider	Pontybrenin 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	344
Pupils of statutory school age	255
Number in nursery classes	42
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%)	11.4%
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 13.2%)	3.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.9%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	4%
Date of headteacher appointment	07/02/2016
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	15/05/2017
Start date of inspection	18/03/2024

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 pupils, staff and parents in Pontybrenin Primary are proud of the happy, friendly ethos in the school. The homely feel and warm welcome make visitors feel a part of the school community quickly. Nearly all pupils' behaviour is excellent and their respect for one another and to all adults is a strength. They are considerate, especially courteous and show respect to their friends and adults.

Pupils feel cared for and supported, and have very positive attitudes towards their learning. There is an established culture of inclusion and diversity in which all pupils thrive. They love coming to school and talk enthusiastically about school life.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills and apply them purposefully in other areas of learning. Across the school, most pupils' oracy skills in English are a strength. However, although the pupils enjoy learning Welsh, they do not always make enough progress in developing their Welsh language skills. In addition, across the school most pupils' digital skills are limited.

The school has a purposeful curriculum providing the pupils with interesting opportunities to build on their knowledge and understanding of their 'cynefin'. Teachers use worthwhile authentic experiences to engage most pupils in lessons. Most pupils contribute successfully to their topics and work well independently on tasks. Opportunities for younger pupils to develop their curiosity and creativity in class and in the outdoor environment are good.

The headteacher provides strong and passionate leadership and is supported purposefully by the staff and governors. Leaders know the school well and share a clear and robust vision to support pupils' well-being and to develop them as lifelong learners. The school has an effective partnership with parents and the wider community. The headteacher, with the support of staff and governors, promotes a robust culture of safeguarding.

Recommendations

R1 Provide opportunities for pupils to build their Welsh language skills systematically and coherently across the school

R2 Improve pupils' digital skills

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils make good progress in their learning during their time at the school. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible for free school meals progress well from their individual starting points and achieve well against their personal targets. Overall, most more able pupils achieve well.

On entry to the school, most pupils develop purposeful vocabulary quickly and become confident to engage with adults and with each other. For example, the nursery pupils assuredly describe in detail what they are doing. By Year 2, most pupils communicate their needs and thoughts clearly. They talk enthusiastically about their topic and can describe life on an ocean liner from the early nineteenth century confidently. From Year 3 to Year 6, most pupils develop conversations maturely and speak knowledgeably about school life in general. They ask thoughtful questions, develop ideas, and make valuable contributions that consider other pupils' views. Overall, oracy skills are a strength.

Most pupils enjoy learning Welsh. They respond positively to teachers' instructions and demonstrate a good understanding of basic commands. A few pupils respond suitably in Welsh when asked simple questions but, overall, most pupils do not make sufficient progress with the development of their Welsh language skills.

Many pupils develop effective reading skills and apply them well to their work. By the time pupils are in Year 2, many read fluently and begin to decode unfamiliar words accurately by using phonic strategies. Most pupils continue to develop their reading skills purposefully as they move from Year 3 to Year 5. In Year 6, pupils read a variety of challenging texts with good understanding. They are confident readers and use researched information from various texts and relevant websites to enrich their work across the curriculum successfully.

Many pupils' discrete writing skills are developing well as they move through the school. The youngest pupils in the nursery experiment with different mark-making methods and begin to form shapes and letters correctly. Many pupils in Year 1 show an awareness of the form of a sentence and punctuate with increasing accuracy. Many pupils in Year 2 write the differences between the roles of Florence Nightingale and Betsi Cadwalader capably. Older pupils write well in a range of contexts. For example, Year 4 pupils produce an interesting presentation on global issues and Year 6 write a detailed non-chronological report on the Rebecca Riots. Many pupils extend their writing through a wide range of genres suitably.

Most pupils make effective progress in developing a range of skills in their maths lessons. Pupils across the school have a good grasp of number work and use correct mathematical vocabulary when completing their calculations. The younger pupils in the nursery recognise numbers through a range of practical activities, for example counting how many different objects in the chest. As the pupils move through the years, they recall and build on previous learning successfully. Most pupils support each other well when tackling problems, such as calculating which size Morrison shelter could fit in a living room. They use more formal calculation strategies.

accurately. Most pupils are beginning to use their numeracy skills in other areas of learning.

The progression of most pupils' digital skills is developing slowly. Across the school most pupils use apps to support their learning confidently and many pupils research a variety of thematic related topics to create interesting presentations. In Year 4, many pupils design simple animations of a fairy tale character suitably and by Year 6 they begin to understand how to use a spreadsheet to calculate the mode, median and range of hand spans. However, overall, most pupils' wider digital skills are not developing well enough, such as data handling, coding, spreadsheets and databases.

Most pupils' physical skills develop successfully through a variety of purposeful activities. From nursery to Year 2, they develop their skills effectively in movement lessons in the hall and in the outdoor learning area. The older pupils continue to build on these skills successfully in regular planned lessons, after school clubs and through taking part competitively with other schools both in the local area and Wales as a whole.

Most pupils develop their creative skills confidently, exploring and experimenting with different media suitably. They develop a good knowledge of the different styles of Welsh artists and replicate these effectively in their own work. Most pupils develop their musical skills purposefully through singing with the school choir, learning musical instruments and performing in the local community. The younger pupils access the outdoor learning environment often and develop their curiosity and independent creative skills well.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are happy and friendly. They show respect to all adults and are caring towards their peers. Nearly all pupils talk proudly about the school and are very aware of the care they receive from all staff. They feel safe at school and know whom to approach if they have any concerns. Nearly all pupils' behaviour across the school is excellent.

Most pupils show a sound awareness of how to support their own well-being. For example, pupils identify how they feel when they arrive in the class in the morning and staff respond promptly to any concerns or needs. Many pupils appreciate the 'cwtsh' areas in each class that support the pupils to manage their emotions. These areas help many pupils to reflect on their feelings before being able to re-engage with their work quickly.

Most pupils enter the school with a big smile and an enthusiasm for learning. During the school day they interact well in a variety of scenarios, work effectively with their peers and listen to, and respect, the views of others. Many pupils enjoy working collaboratively in groups when, for example, discussing how the wealthy and the poor passengers had different experiences on the Titanic. Nearly all pupils across the school offer interesting ideas to the class topic and are very proud of their contributions. They are confident that staff listen carefully to their ideas. Nearly all pupils tackle new experiences positively and many persevere purposefully when they face a challenge, for example when deciding on an appropriate scale to construct

their pulse rate graph. Across the school, most pupils' ability to work independently is strong. Although the majority of pupils are beginning to reflect and improve their own work during class lessons, overall, their input into improving completed work is less effective.

Most pupils demonstrate a deep understanding of children's rights and discuss how it affects them and children in other countries. Most pupils are very aware of the importance of their contributions towards creating a caring society and they develop effectively as ethical and well-informed citizens. For example, most older pupils develop a mature understanding of the challenges that arise in their locality, such as homelessness and mental health. Most pupils contribute to a local food bank and activities in school to support national charities. This contributes to nearly all pupils developing a strong sense of empathy.

Most pupils across the school have a sound knowledge and positive attitudes towards living healthy lives. They know how fruit and vegetables are an essential part of a healthy diet. Most pupils take part regularly in physical activities during the day and in extra-curricular activities, such as rugby, football and dance. Most pupils are aware of the importance of staying safe online.

Across the school, all pupils benefit enormously from a variety of sessions during the school's annual well-being event that helps them develop their physical skills and deepens their understanding of health issues. The school holds an 'I am unique' day and this supports pupils to be confident to celebrate who they are and what they believe. This is a strength of the school.

Many pupils are beginning to develop their leadership roles and to take on responsibilities. For example, the school council have organised a whole-school fund raising event and the eco committee planted flowers to improve the school environment. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to discuss which areas of the provision they would like to influence independently without over direction from adults. As a result, they have very little impact on school life.

Most pupils develop purposeful entrepreneurial skills. They have a sound understanding of the basic rules of how to run a business. For example, they plan, design and create their homemade goods competently and sell them in a craft market in the city centre.

Teaching and learning experiences

Teachers and support staff at Pontybrenin Primary School display a caring and nurturing attitude towards their pupils. They know their pupils well and form positive relationships based on trust and mutual respect. This is a strength of the school that firmly supports and enhances pupils' learning and well-being.

Leaders and staff have created a broad, balanced, relevant and engaging curriculum that successfully builds upon pupils' prior knowledge, skills and understanding. Most teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject areas they are teaching and provide a range of creative and exciting approaches to involve all the pupils in their learning. Across the school, pupils influence the way in which themes such as 'Belonging', and 'Identity' develop. In addition, teachers are flexible in their planning

and adapt learning activities in response to pupils' interests and enthusiasm during lessons. As a result, nearly all pupils are fully engaged in lessons and have a sense of ownership of their learning.

Teachers plan effective opportunities for pupils to learn about their locality, Wales and the wider world. For example, younger pupils explore the history of how two women helped to rescue men from a sinking lifeboat off the coast of Mumbles. These planned activities deepen pupils' understanding of historical and current Swansea, and are key to their sense of belonging to their 'cynefin'. In addition, the school offers the pupils a range of rich and stimulating educational visits and experiences to support and enhance curriculum provision, which includes residential courses outside the local area.

Through their topic work, staff plan purposeful opportunities to raise pupils' awareness, and develop their understanding of, diversity and equality, for example by studying the plight of refugees who now live in Wales, and the lives of well-known inspirational black figures such as Floella Benjamin. Inspirational visitors to the school, such as a local paramedic and police officers, share their expertise with the pupils and encourage them to think about what they would like to be when they grow up.

Teachers across the school work together effectively to ensure that pupils' literacy and numeracy skills develop progressively and successfully as they move through the school. In the youngest classes teachers organise the learning environment well to encourage pupils to talk and to fully engage them in activities to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills. Most teachers carefully plan activities to ensure that the older pupils continue to build on these skills progressively. They provide purposeful opportunities for the pupils to apply their skills in other areas of their learning. However, teachers do not develop pupils' digital skills well enough, and, as a result, most pupils' digital skills are limited.

Staff plan regular sessions to develop pupils' Welsh oracy skills and are beginning to use Welsh phrases during the day suitably. However, overall, there are limited opportunities for pupils to use their Welsh oracy skills and this impacts negatively on pupils' ability to speak Welsh with confidence and competence.

Staff make imaginative use of the well-resourced and vibrant outdoor learning areas to support and develop younger pupils' learning, well-being, thinking skills and problem-solving skills successfully. For instance, they provide enriching and challenging opportunities for pupils to plan, design and make their own fruity cocktails to be sold onboard the Titanic.

Teachers and support staff have high expectations and display a consistent approach to classroom organisation and routines throughout the school. They provide a purposeful, attractive and stimulating working environment that reflects the principles of Curriculum for Wales well. Most teachers set a brisk pace to the lessons and challenge pupils appropriately. They use an effective range of questioning techniques to encourage pupils to develop their thinking skills and support pupils in consolidating their learning. They use assessment information purposefully to inform the next steps in learning and provide productive and instant feedback, which enables pupils to improve their learning effectively during lessons.

Care, support and guidance

Pontybrenin Primary School is a welcoming, caring and inclusive school. Throughout the school, staff work together purposefully to create a positive environment in which pupils feel safe, valued and listened to. Teachers and support staff model positive attitudes, language and behaviour well through their interactions with pupils and each other. The school's highly successful approach to supporting pupils' well-being and promoting healthy relationships means that behaviour is excellent across the school. The school's safeguarding culture is well established and gives no cause for concern.

Provision for pupils with ALN is a strong aspect of the school's work. The ALN co-ordinator provides beneficial leadership and works constructively with other staff to ensure that ALN provision is tailored carefully to pupils' needs. The school has worthwhile partnerships with a good range of external organisations. These help to provide additional expertise to the school's ALN work and have been useful in assisting the school's efficient implementation of the Welsh Government's ALN reform. The school deploys teaching assistants effectively to provide valuable support for individual and small groups of pupils. In most cases, ALN pupils enjoy these sessions and make good progress in their learning.

The school is proactive in taking positive steps to address the needs of its most vulnerable pupils. The recent creation of an additional learning class successfully ensures that a small group of pupils with significant needs are well supported to access the school's curriculum. Processes to track and evaluate the progress of pupils with ALN are sound. The school uses a solid range of assessment information ably to evaluate the impact of its ALN provision on pupils' learning and well-being.

The school works productively with parents and outside agencies to successfully promote good attendance and, as a result, most pupils attend school daily. There are robust processes in place to monitor pupils' attendance and punctuality. Persistent non-attendance and lateness are addressed effectively through a clear set of follow-up actions such as phone calls, letters and face to face meetings with senior staff. The school celebrates and rewards good levels of attendance during weekly assemblies.

There is strong provision for the support of pupils' well-being. Throughout the school, staff successfully teach strategies that help pupils to self-regulate when they are upset or are in situations that they find challenging. Teachers deliver valuable online safety and anti-bullying messages skilfully to pupils of all ages. The school's annual well-being week provides pupils with good opportunities to develop a worthwhile understanding of how to look after and enhance their own physical and mental health.

Throughout the school, staff provide pupils with a good range of opportunities to engage in physical activities and the creative arts. For example, participation in a city-wide drama project enables older pupils to perform in front of a large audience at the Grand Theatre, Swansea. Beneficial arrangements are in place to ensure that the school does not prohibit pupils from low-income households from taking part in enrichment and extra-curricular activities. There is a useful range of pupil leadership groups, which are beginning to provide pupils with the chance to influence the work of the school in a very few instances. However, in general staff over-direct these

group and do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to carry out their leadership roles independently. As a result, the impact of pupil groups is currently limited.

The school's inclusive culture successfully ensures that most pupils develop a good sense of respect, empathy and compassion. Work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is purposeful and there are suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about various world faiths and cultures. The school's curriculum and collective worship arrangements provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own views, beliefs and experiences, as well as those of others. In addition, planned activities to ensure that pupils have a good understanding of their rights are effective and this work permeates the broad and balanced curriculum.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides compassionate and wise leadership in a caring and inclusive environment, where pupils and staff feel a sense of belonging. Staff work together positively to encourage pupils to be responsible and respectful and, as a result, the behaviour and engagement of nearly all pupils towards their work and school life is excellent. The headteacher sets high expectations for himself, staff and pupils. He is supported purposefully by the acting deputy headteacher, and they share their vision 'to happily learn together in a fair and caring school community' effectively with staff, pupils, parents and governors.

Staff undertake their roles and responsibilities professionally and conscientiously. They collaborate well together, and with staff from other schools, to deliver effective classroom provision that enables most pupils to make progress in line with expectations. Support staff are key members of the school's team and contribute skilfully to improving pupils' standards of learning, their well-being and social skills.

Leaders use a range of effective activities for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and, as a result, staff have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Over time, they have identified key areas for improvement, such as improving pupils' reading skills and the need to embed the principles of progression across all areas of learning for all groups of learners.

Leaders and staff address local and national priorities well. For example, they have made good progress in designing the school's curriculum, which includes enriching, cross-curricular tasks that promote independent learning effectively and includes pupil voice as an integral part of the planning. Work to address the Welsh Government's additional learning needs reform and tackling the impact of poverty is successful. Leaders plan regular opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills in formal situations and implement these plans purposefully. However, these lack challenge and do not provide opportunities for pupils to make sufficient progress and to build on prior learning.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's role in serving the local community and are supportive. They are beginning to be actively involved in self-evaluation and improvement arrangements with leaders. They share responsibilities sensibly, and leaders are beginning to make the most of governors' expertise. For example, a link governor collaborates with the school's ALNCo to support with the implementation of the ALN bill and establishing the additional learning class.

Although governors scrutinise reports provided by the headteacher and have a sound knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, they do not have a secure enough understanding of the effectiveness of teaching and learning across the school.

The headteacher and governors manage the school's finances efficiently. There are a suitable number of staff and resources, and spending is monitored carefully. They pay due regard to challenging the impact of poverty, using the pupil development grant to support improvement priorities successfully. For example, they ensure that pupils have equal access to curriculum enrichment, subsidise extra-curricular provision and provide opportunities to ensure their well-being. Governors and staff promote healthy eating and drinking well through planned curriculum arrangements and through daily activities.

The headteacher creates a positive professional learning culture for most staff. He ensures that opportunities for professional learning link purposefully to both whole-school priorities and the individual needs of staff. As a result, staff have a wide range of strengths, which they use effectively to support the needs of many pupils in the school.

Leaders work in partnership with parents and the wider school community to improve opportunities and outcomes for all pupils. Parents are kept well informed of school developments and appreciate the presence and support of staff at the start and end of the school day.

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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