



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

A report on
Ffaldau Primary School

**Albany Road
Pontycymmer
Bridgend
CF32 8HW**

Date of inspection: May 2024

by

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

This inspection was undertaken as part of trying out our new inspection arrangements. As a result, this report may be slightly different in format to other published reports for providers in the sector.

About Ffaldau Primary School

Name of provider	Ffaldau Primary School
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	136
Pupils of statutory school age	107
Number in nursery classes	14
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%)	36.2%
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%)	4.7%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language (categories A-C)	
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2009
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/09/2014
Start date of inspection	13/05/2024

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.

Summary

Ffaldau Primary School is a caring school where the well-being of pupils and their prospects are central to all it does. This is due to the strong, agile and effective leadership provided by the executive headteacher and the unwavering support she receives from the deputy headteacher in her role as head of school.

Leaders have invested time in the staff team and provided beneficial professional development to ensure that they are confident and competent in their roles. Teachers and support staff develop calm and inviting learning environments that encourage pupils to become confident and independent learners. As a result of the consistent approach of staff, the behaviour of pupils is an exemplary feature of the school. In addition, staff use common methods to develop pupils independence, engage pupils in their learning and ensure that they make good progress. Teachers' highly effective questioning and deep knowledge of pupils' needs and interest assist the delivery of a highly engaging curriculum that enables most pupils to make good progress. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills and apply them across the curriculum at a suitably challenging level.

The school's additional learning needs (ALN) co-ordinator has worked with staff to develop robust procedures to support pupils with ALN. As a result, they make good progress in lessons and over time. Leaders place a high priority on pupil attendance and work with families to ensure that their children attend school regularly, yet rates of attendance are still too low. Overall, parents value what the school does for their children and the way in which it shares important information with them.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Improve pupils' ability to write at length across the curriculum and at a suitably challenging level
- R2 Improve pupil attendance

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

The executive headteacher and head of school work in strong partnership to provide strategic direction for the school. They focus appropriately on the needs of pupils and raising their aspirations. Leaders and staff share a firm commitment to ensuring that economic disadvantage is not a barrier to pupils' achievement. This helps to make Ffaldau Primary an inclusive and caring school.

A majority of pupils start school in the nursery class with skills below those expected for their age. During their time in school, most pupils, including those affected by socio-economic disadvantage and with additional learning needs (ALN), make at least good progress from their starting points. This is a result of the meaningful and engaging learning opportunities that staff provide.

The school has high expectations and clear guidelines to promote positive behaviour. An outstanding feature of the school is the positive manner in which pupils behave in lessons and as they move around the school. In their lessons, most pupils are highly engaged in their learning and collaborate well with others on their tasks. Nearly all pupils are polite and courteous to each other and to adults, feel safe in school and know who they can turn to if they need support. Leaders monitor pupil attendance carefully and staff work effectively with external partners to support families to improve their children's attendance. However, a minority of pupils' rates of attendance are below expected levels. This aspect of the school's work remains a priority for improvement.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils and deliver lessons at an appropriate pace. This helps to ensure that nearly all pupils are engaged and actively involved in their learning. Teachers deploy support staff well to encourage pupils' independent learning. They are skilled in allowing pupils the time and space to persevere at their tasks. Teachers encourage pupils to express their views about what and how they learn. This enables them to plan authentic contexts for learning and meaningful ways for pupils to apply their skills.

Cameo: Effective approaches to assessment for learning

Teachers use highly effective questioning to assess pupils' understanding in the moment and to support or extend pupils' learning. The oral and written feedback provided by staff has a positive impact on pupils' progress. They provide valuable opportunities for pupils to respond and improve their work. This helps to ensure that pupils do not repeatedly make the same mistakes. Teachers use more sophisticated assessment for learning strategies as pupils get older and pupils develop the skills to reflect effectively on the quality of their learning and their next steps in learning.

Curriculum development is a high priority for leaders. They ensure that staff have opportunities to engage in meaningful professional learning and the time to collaborate in developing their ideas. This is enabling staff to develop a purposeful and meaningful curriculum that reflects the context of the community at Pontycymmer. Teachers plan systematically for the development of pupils' skills and reflect carefully

on the progress they make. Generally, they provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop their skills across the curriculum. This helps pupils to achieve the next steps in their learning in engaging and interesting ways. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills at length and in a range of genre across the curriculum.

Staff ensure that the curriculum supports the development of pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural understanding, for instance teaching them to be considerate of others, to respect differences and to understand the importance of equality. Pupils become confident individuals with a sound awareness of the importance of healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe, including online. Teachers ensure valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about Wales and their local community through the rich provision in their curriculum, visits and involvement in local projects. The school encourages pupils to raise their aspirations for their future. For example, older pupils visit local employers to learn about the world of work and begin to consider their future careers. Teachers plan a few opportunities for pupils to learn about the wider world and develop an understanding of global issues, such as pollution and slavery. However, overall, this work is underdeveloped.

Teachers ensure the thoughtful development of pupils' social and communication skills. As a result of the school's strong focus on developing pupils' oracy skills, most pupils become confident speakers. They develop their phonic skills well and, over time, become confident readers. Teachers develop pupils' writing skills effectively to ensure that by the time they leave the school most begin to write for a range of purposes using different genre. However, pupils do not write at length frequently enough, develop their understanding of the technical aspects of different genre with sufficient depth, or use their writing skills across the curriculum sufficiently. There are plenty of beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills. This enables most pupils to respond to commands in Welsh and to begin to hold conversations on a range of subjects.

Teachers develop pupils' numeracy skills effectively from an early stage. They explore simple numbers in the youngest classes and move on to solving complex problems, using the four operations with numbers to a million, in the oldest year groups. The school's structured approach to developing mathematics enables pupils to learn wider concepts, such as plotting co-ordinates and calculating the area and perimeter of shapes.

Teachers provide authentic opportunities for pupils to develop their digital skills well. For instance, younger pupils successfully program a toy to carry out specific instructions. Older pupils use technology effectively to improve their understanding of energy usage at the school by monitoring the lighting in classrooms.

Pupils develop their creative skills in a variety of ways and, from Year 2 upwards, can learn to play a musical instrument, such as a recorder or flute. Over time, pupils develop their physical skills well. Younger pupils have many opportunities to develop their motor skills through a variety of engaging and purposeful activities.

A notable feature of the school's provision is the support for pupils with ALN. The ALNCO effectively ensures that there is appropriate support for those with identified needs, and parents value this. Nearly all pupils with ALN make good progress towards their individual targets. The school ensures effective transition arrangements for pupils as they progress to a new class or secondary school, with bespoke visits for pupils with ALN.

There are frequent opportunities for pupils to contribute to many aspects of school life. For example, the Pupil Parliament were instrumental in improving the quality of school meals. In classes, staff encourage pupils to input into what they are learning. Overall, pupils' voice across the school is strong.

The executive headteacher has high expectations and a clear focus on improving standards. She places a strong focus on building leadership capacity across the school and distributes leadership effectively. Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

The deputy headteacher, as head of school, provides strong leadership and day-to-day management. She has a firm understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. She leads the staff effectively in improving teaching and pupil outcomes, including for those who are vulnerable.

Senior leaders effectively support the executive headteacher in the monitoring, evaluation, and review processes. They accurately monitor provision to identify strengths and areas for development. Staff evaluate this information and devise improvement actions, which they keep under continual review. This leads to sustained improvements for pupils' learning and well-being. Leaders are successful in supporting the development of staff through beneficial professional learning opportunities that align well with school's development priorities, for example the deputy headteacher's leadership of improvements to teaching.

Governors are beginning to have a greater involvement in self-evaluation and school improvement. They undertake relevant training and are aware of national priorities, such as Curriculum for Wales and equity. Leaders and governors regularly review the school's finances and keep spending priorities under constant review. The pupil development grant supports the work of the pupil support officer, who has a crucial role in engaging with families, for example by working with them to ensure that pupils attend school more regularly.

Additional information

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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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