



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

**A report on**

**Pengam Primary School**

**Commercial Street  
Pengam  
Blackwood  
NP12 3ST**

**Date of inspection: February 2023**

**by**

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

## About Pengam Primary School

Name of provider	Pengam Primary School
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	N/A
Number of pupils on roll	217
Pupils of statutory school age	185
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 23.0%)	19.3%
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 16.1%)	10.7%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	N/A
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2013
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/05/2014
Start date of inspection	02/06/2023

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](http://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

Pengam Primary School is part of the Fleur-De-Lys and Pengam Federation. It is a vibrant and nurturing school where pupils feel valued and supported by staff. As a result, nearly all pupils approach school life with enthusiasm and show positive attitudes towards their learning, each other and their school community.

During their time at the school, most pupils make good progress from their starting points, including those pupils with additional learning needs. Pupils of all ages are becoming confident mathematicians and their digital skills are developing well across the school. While pupils' writing skills are developing suitably, they do not always write well enough at length particularly across the curriculum. Younger pupils use the Welsh language effectively. However, older pupils do not always show enough progression from these strong foundations. Overall, pupils benefit from an engaging curriculum, which encourages an interest in their local area and the diverse nature of Wales.

Staff know their children well. They work diligently to support the needs of all pupils, including those who require additional help. Occasionally, staff are too eager to intervene and over-direct pupils' learning. As a result, pupils become less independent, as they are not always challenged well enough to develop their own thinking or reflect carefully enough on their learning.

Pupils have many opportunities to take on leadership roles and pupil voice groups work closely with governors and the federation. These groups ensure that pupils have a strong voice in the school, for example where super ambassadors work effectively to raise awareness of the rights of the child across the school.

Leaders have developed a strong culture of mutual support and collaboration across the school and the federation. Staff work with dedication to ensure that pupils experience a wide range of learning opportunities in the classroom and outdoors. The extensive range of after-school clubs provided by staff further inspire pupils to develop new interests. As a result, nearly all pupils are happy and proud to attend Pengam Primary School.

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve teaching and assessment to ensure that all pupils are challenged appropriately and that learning activities meet their developmental needs
- R2 Improve opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and effectiveness as learners
- R3 Improve pupils' speaking and extended writing skills
- R4 Strengthen school improvement processes to ensure that leaders provide suitable challenge for staff on the impact their teaching makes on pupils' progress
- R5 Improve attendance of pupils, particularly those pupils eligible for free school meals

## **What happens next**

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

## Main evaluation

### Learning

In general, around half of pupils start school with relatively weak skills in many aspects of their learning. Overall, many pupils make strong progress, including those pupils with additional learning needs. A majority of pupils eligible for free school meals make similar progress to their peers.

Early on in their school life, many pupils develop their speaking and listening skills well. In reception, most pupils begin to speak appropriately using simple phrases and sentences and are keen to talk to visitors. By Year 2, most pupils express their ideas suitably and listen well to instructions. They discuss their work with confidence, for example when talking about how to separate the tens and the units in order to make it easier to double a number. In Year 4, most pupils listen well and speak clearly to a partner, for instance as they talk about online safety. By Year 5 and Year 6, nearly all pupils listen to adults and each other respectfully. A majority of pupils explain their ideas suitably, organising what they say so that others can follow. However, a minority of pupils are unable to articulate their thinking clearly enough and these pupils struggle to contribute effectively to class discussions or when working in groups.

Many pupils develop their early reading skills well. In reception, many develop a rapid understanding of letters and sounds, and read simple words, such as pig and mop, confidently. By Year 1, many pupils use their knowledge of phonics successfully to build words. A few more able pupils read with good fluency and expression, and answer questions about stories thoughtfully. Many older pupils read suitable texts confidently. They discuss what they have read and make suitable predictions about what may happen next. A minority of pupils recognise when they read words incorrectly and are beginning to self-correct to help them make sense of the text. However, a minority do not always understand what they have read well enough as they do not understand keywords and phrases sufficiently well. These pupils struggle to infer information from texts.

In nursery, many pupils explore early mark making effectively, for instance drawing in felt tip and making lines, dots and shapes. In reception, a majority of pupils are beginning to show an understanding of the purposes for writing, for instance independently making a card for a family member in the role play post office. Many are beginning to form letters correctly and write simple words clearly. By Year 2, many pupils follow, and build upon, different writing forms modelled by the teacher and structure their writing appropriately, such as when writing an invitation letter to a grandparent. In Year 5, most pupils write using an appropriate vocabulary. They expand upon a point with supporting reasons and information, for example when explaining how they made items for the Christmas fayre. By Year 6, many pupils write a suitable account or letter. They make thoughtful vocabulary choices and use different techniques, such as rhetorical questions, to hold the readers' interest. However, they do not often write at length well enough or review and improve their work independently.

In the first few years of school, many pupils develop their Welsh language skills quickly and effectively. In reception, pupils are confident to approach adults to say good morning in Welsh independently. By Year 2, many pupils have a good recall of a wide range of useful sentences and phrases. They greet each other, and ask others their age and where they live readily. Many know how to give information about themselves, such as their eye and hair colour, often using sign language with their Welsh simultaneously. As they move past Year 3, pupils' progress in using the Welsh language slows. A majority of older pupils find it difficult to ask and respond to simple questions in Welsh without support and, overall, their use of Welsh is underdeveloped.

Most pupils develop effective numeracy skills. In reception, many count objects accurately to ten, such as when counting toy animals in the field. By Year 1, many pupils understand simple fractions well and by Year 2 many pupils estimate numbers to 100, for example when comparing the number of seeds in different sizes of pumpkins. Many older pupils have a good understanding of place value and use this to order numbers, including those with decimals, accurately. They draw accurate bar charts to represent information they have collected, for instance vehicles passing the school or population changes in the local area. By Year 6, most pupils have well-developed skills. They represent data using simple spreadsheets to create pie charts, measuring and drawing angles to represent data collected on different types of houses.

Many pupils develop and use their digital skills effectively. In Year 1, pupils use the green screen confidently, for example to record others talking about how the Victorians washed their clothes. In Year 4, most pupils use the internet for research and present their work using different apps appropriately. For example, they use online maps and a street-view to identify their houses and create a poster to support their local area. By Year 6, many pupils use digital tools across curriculum well. For example, they use simple spreadsheets to record data, and use information to draw graphs to analyse their findings.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Most pupils enjoy coming to school. They are welcoming and polite towards visitors and to each other. Nearly all behave well in classrooms, during breaks and lunchtime and when moving around the school. Many pupils listen carefully to others' ideas and demonstrate respect when others have a different view from their own.

Nearly all feel safe and secure in the school and know who to talk to when they have a problem. Nearly all learners enjoy their weekly lessons on well-being and learn how to regulate their emotions and to consider aspects such as Dreams and Goals. For example, pupils in Year 4 discuss the resilience of Michael Jordan when he wasn't picked for his school team and look at ways to counteract disappointment in their own lives. Digital leaders play an important role in ensuring that pupils are aware of how to stay safe online, and as a result most pupils know the importance of protecting passwords and not talking to strangers online.

Most pupils have a good understanding of the importance of eating and drinking healthily. They grow vegetables in the school garden and use these to make healthy, nourishing meals, for example a traditional Welsh 'cawl'. Pupils are fully aware of the

benefit of physical exercise on their health and well-being. Older pupils, for instance, take part with determination in circuit training during PE sessions. Additionally, pupils talk with enthusiasm about their outdoor learning and embrace the opportunity to face challenges. For example, older pupils benefit from learning how nature can have a positive impact on mental health and well-being.

Many pupils are keen to engage in the extensive range of after-school clubs, including gardening, folk dancing and chess. They develop enterprising skills successfully through designing, marketing and making products out of recycled materials to sell at a Christmas Fayre.

Many pupils make good use of opportunities to develop their leadership skills through an extensive range of well-established pupil voice groups. These include the senior leadership team, the well-being team and digital leaders. They talk enthusiastically about their role and explain how their work has made a difference to school life. Members of the well-being team for instance explain how they have set up a library area containing books that might be useful for pupils or parents. Pupils in these leadership roles often work closely together across the schools in the federation on joint projects. In a very few instances, pupil groups are beginning to engage more regularly with their peers so that a wider range of pupils have sufficient opportunity to influence the life of the school.

Nearly all pupils treat others with respect and are positive about diversity and its role in society. Older pupils speak passionately about issues around racism, for example when they study the speech of Martin Luther King and create their own speeches and artwork in response. Most pupils develop a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. The super ambassadors have recently met with the Children's Commissioner for Wales and work to promote understanding of children's' rights across the school.

From an early age, most pupils have a positive attitude to school and show an interest in their work. They develop positive attitudes to learning and demonstrate sustained engagement in lessons. However, a minority of pupils are too reliant on their teachers for support and, as a result, they do not always develop well enough as effective learners. These pupils do not develop their own thinking well enough or reflect carefully enough on their own work to make meaningful improvements.

Rates of attendance at the school are low overall. In particular, the absence rate of those pupils eligible for free school meals is significantly higher when compared that to that of their peers.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

The school has established a clear vision for the curriculum to provide authentic and engaging learning opportunities for all pupils.

A range of relevant topics capture pupils' interest well. For example, pupils in Year 6 speak with understanding and empathy about a 'diversity' topic and the opportunities it is giving them to develop their understanding of difficult subjects such as racism.

Regular visitors to the school enhance the curriculum effectively. In Year 5, local police community support officers work with pupils to design posters aimed at keeping local elderly and vulnerable members of the community safe. This supports pupils to empathise with others and successfully develops a sense of belonging and community.

Outdoor learning is a strong feature of provision throughout the school. All pupils plant and care for a range of produce to develop useful life skills as they cook and eat food they have grown.

The school celebrates Welsh culture effectively throughout the year. This includes special events such as 'Welsh fortnight' when a storyteller visits each class to share a variety of traditional Welsh stories. During a 'Wales Through the Window' topic, younger pupils enjoy recognising features of the local environment when using a mapping application to explore their journey to school.

The school's provision to develop numeracy and digital competency is effective. The teaching of literacy is suitable overall, although staff do not always provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to apply and extend their oracy and writing skills in a wider range of contexts across the curriculum. Provision to develop pupils' reading and Welsh language skills is effective for younger pupils.

Most staff across the school develop strong professional relationships with pupils. They show care and kindness and manage pupils' behaviour positively. However, they regularly provide too much support for pupils. For example, when pupils experience a difficulty in their work or play, adults choose to intervene too quickly and often provide the solution before pupils have had the opportunity to think for themselves. This limits opportunities for pupils to develop as confident, independent learners.

Teachers have clear learning intentions for lessons and provide effective explanations to help pupils make progress. In many classes, the pace of learning is effective and supports pupils to maintain interest and concentrate effectively. In many lessons, staff model positive approaches to learning and provide useful resources. For example, in Year 3, the teacher provides an engaging app, which helps pupils understand how the body works.

Teaching in a majority of lessons includes the use of effective questioning to challenge pupils' thinking and check for understanding. For example, in Year 5 staff ask questions such as 'How do we know?' to support pupils to justify their answers well during a maths lesson. However, in a minority of cases, questioning does not provide enough challenge for pupils. For instance, staff accept very short answers or do not prompt pupils to develop their responses. This limits opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge and deepen their understanding.

Provision for the youngest pupils provides suitable opportunities to learn through play and exploration. For example, pupils in the reception class develop their personal, social and physical skills well as they build a castle with a friend in the block area. In a few instances, areas of provision for youngest pupils are uninviting or provide a limited range of resources.



In most cases, teachers and support staff know their pupils' strengths and areas for improvement well. They encourage pupils and praise them for their achievements. A few staff are beginning to use day-to-day assessment strategies to help pupils reflect on and improve their work successfully. However, this is at an early stage and is not currently having a significant impact on accelerating pupils' learning across the school.

### **Care, support and guidance**

The school is inclusive and nurturing with a clear focus on pupils' well-being. This caring and supportive approach ensures that relationships between staff, pupils and parents are strong. Staff know their pupils well and support their emotional and social needs effectively. There is a consistent approach to supporting positive behaviour and, as a result, pupils understand what is expected of them and nearly all behave well.

The school has good processes to identify and provide support for pupils with ALN. Staff communicate effectively with parents of pupils with ALN and work with them to create and share individual targets and support programmes. Teachers and support staff deliver a suitable range of intervention programmes to address pupils' social, emotional and learning needs. They review pupils' progress regularly and adapt support as required. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCO) and staff collaborate well with external agencies for those pupils who need specialist support and staff work well together to ensure that their classrooms are inclusive. As a result, most pupils with ALN make suitable progress towards their targets.

Pupil voice groups are a strong feature in the school. Leaders and staff provide a good range of opportunities for them to influence decision-making in the school. For example, the pupil Senior Leadership Team are beginning to work with governors to promote the importance of attendance through awards and treats such as hot chocolate around the log circle. Pupils with leadership roles deliver engaging assemblies. For example, digital leaders deliver key messages about internet safety and challenge their peers to reflect upon how they use online platforms.

Staff carry out helpful weekly well-being sessions with pupils. These sessions focus on 'heart, mind, body and soul' to enable pupils to understand how all these aspects work together to create a sense of well-being. They focus on a range of topical issues to challenge stereotypes, such as racism and ageism, and this successfully enables pupils to speak openly about their own feelings, build relationships and celebrate differences.

The school has created a well-being library for pupils and parents, which allows them to access appropriate information to support their individual needs. For example, pupils can find advice leaflets to help them deal with challenges they are facing. The school values the role parents play in their child's education and provides regular opportunities for them to work in school alongside their children on curriculum and creative projects.

The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their social, moral and spiritual awareness. Assemblies allow pupils to reflect on the shared values such as compassion and determination and pupils develop their creative skills through

performances including concerts and an annual talent competition. Staff provide an extensive range of extra-curricular clubs to further increase opportunities for pupils to develop their skills within areas of interest to them. These range from sports clubs to a debating society and provide many and varied opportunities for pupils.

Staff plan rich topics throughout the curriculum, which enable the pupils to learn about their Welsh heritage and culture. For example, the Cynefin topic provides pupils with the opportunity to visit a local museum and create reports for historical events such as the Senghenydd mining disaster. This helps pupils to understand the experiences of local families and develop their empathy for challenges faced in their own communities. Staff build useful links with the community to provide engaging real life learning experiences. For example, pupils complete 'job applications' to join the local Heddlu Bach project and learn important lifesaving skills from St John's Ambulance.

Staff provide an extensive range of extra-curricular clubs to further increase opportunities for pupils to develop their skills within areas of interest to them. These include sports such as rugby and athletics as well as a gardening and book club. These provide many and varied opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills and enthusiasm for lifelong learning.

The school has a suitable culture of safeguarding. Leaders ensure that there are robust policies and procedures in place, which all staff follow to ensure the safety of learners and staff. The school curriculum supports pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe and a particular strength is the range of opportunities for pupils to learn about how to stay safe online. The school's procedures for monitoring attendance are appropriate. It works with outside agencies, including the education welfare officer, to support pupils who are causing significant concern. However, these procedures are not having sufficient impact on improving attendance and pupils eligible for free school meals continue to have a significantly higher rate of absence compared to other pupils.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher is a strong role model who has established a dedicated team of teachers and support staff across the federation. Leaders have worked effectively to develop a shared vision for the federation, building upon the common values of both schools. There is a strong culture of mutual support and collaboration across both schools and staff work diligently to nurture, inspire and help pupils achieve.

Leaders ensure that self-evaluation processes are well embedded across the federation. They use a good range of evidence to decide upon the priorities required for the schools to make progress. Leaders work well with staff to establish appropriate priorities for improvement and ensure that all teachers have well-defined leadership roles. Staff collaborate effectively across the schools to set priorities for improvement and to monitor and evaluate progress. In most cases, these priorities identify the strengths and areas for development accurately for both schools in the federation. However, in a few instances, priorities are too broad and do not focus directly enough on the impact of actions on pupils' learning.

Governors are enthusiastic supporters of the federation and are kept well informed by leaders about the progress the school is making. They have a suitable understanding of national priorities, including the curriculum for Wales and ALN reform. They ensure that there are appropriate arrangements for healthy eating and drinking. On a few occasions, they have a direct impact on curriculum development, for example when improving opportunities for pupils to develop their financial literacy.

Pupil leadership groups meet regularly with governors to talk about their work in school. In a few instances, governors work with these groups to improve provision, for example in addressing the concerns around pupils' attendance. They attend professional learning sessions with staff, where they have useful opportunities to discuss and challenge curriculum impact plans. Governors are beginning to use some first-hand evidence to support their role as critical friends, for example looking at pupils' work.

Leaders and teachers are developing suitable approaches to monitor the progress of pupils' learning over time. For example, they carry out individual learning reviews with every child at key points throughout the year. They ensure that information about pupil progress is shared suitably between classes, and teachers and support staff work well together to share information about individual pupils' progress and their next steps. Leaders and staff are beginning to understand how to use ongoing formative assessment to check for understanding and make teaching more responsive to the needs of learners.

Leaders regularly evaluate the quality of teaching and are beginning to provide useful opportunities for staff to reflect upon and improve their own practice. For example, staff have recently engaged in a programme of professional learning, where they use video evidence of their own teaching and compare this to good practice. Overall, however, leaders have not always focused sharply enough on those aspects of teaching that have the most impact on pupils' progress. As a result, the quality of teaching across the federation is too variable and improvements are not always made quickly enough.

Overall, arrangements for the professional development of staff are effective and link well to school priorities. Leaders ensure that all staff have meaningful professional learning opportunities to improve aspects of their practice. For example, staff have received effective training to improve teaching in mathematics, which has had a positive impact on pupils' number skills.

Leaders ensure that there are good opportunities for staff to work with other schools. For example, staff engage in a curriculum design project alongside cluster colleagues, which is successful in improving their understanding of curriculum design and pupil progression. Opportunities for collaboration and professional learning across the cluster and more widely are a strength of the school.

Leaders monitor the impact of professional learning on classroom provision suitably and are beginning to identify and share good practice across the school, for example in using digital tools or providing opportunities for outdoor learning. In a few instances, leaders ensure that good practice is shared across the cluster, for example where a member of the support staff team presented their work on improving pupils' well-being.

Leaders and staff develop effective links with parents. They collect their views and use these to improve the provision for pupils across the federation. For instance, leaders use feedback from parents to improve the learning experiences for pupils using external trips and visits. Staff use digital communication to share pupils' achievements and parents meet regularly with class teachers to discuss progress and share next steps. Overall, there is a strong culture of openness and support between school staff and parents.

Leaders and governors use the school's resources effectively. They set appropriate financial priorities and use grants suitably, including the pupil development grant, to support the learning of pupils. They create attractive and inviting learning environments, with engaging outdoor learning spaces, which pupils use with energy and enthusiasm.

## 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](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Publication date: 12/04/2023