



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

A report on

Bryntirion Infants School

**Bryngolau
Bryntirion
CF31 4DD**

Date of inspection: April 2023

by

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

About Bryntirion Infants School

Name of provider	Bryntirion Infants School
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	144
Pupils of statutory school age	71
Number in nursery classes	29
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%)	48.4%
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 16.1%)	26.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/01/2015
Start date of inspection	24/04/2023

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

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Bryntirion Infants school is a warm and caring school. The newly appointed headteacher has in a relatively short period of time developed strong and effective relationships with the pupils, staff, parents, and the wider community. These relationships result in pupils who are happy to attend school and enjoy participating in their learning.

Most pupils' behaviour across the school is good. They are polite and treat adults and each other with respect. During their time at the school, most pupils make appropriate progress in their learning from their starting points including those pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). They develop their listening and speaking skills well and develop suitable reading and writing skills. Most pupils develop a sound competency in their mathematical skills. However, they do not always have sufficient opportunities to apply this knowledge to problem-solving activities. Across the school, the development of pupils' Welsh language skills is a strength. Pupils enjoy learning new vocabulary in their Welsh lessons and many pupils speak Welsh spontaneously in their play and when interacting with their friends.

The school has two observation classes for pupils with specific additional learning needs. In these classes, pupils begin to develop their skills successfully. Well-informed staff identify their next steps for learning and support them effectively to make progress in their development.

Leaders and staff are beginning to develop a curriculum that meets the needs of young pupils. The curriculum offers a suitable range of learning experiences, and visits and visitors to the school provide pupils with authentic and engaging learning opportunities. However, overall, leaders and teachers do not consider well enough how the areas of learning will work together in their thematic planning. In addition, teachers, particularly those of the youngest pupils, have not considered well enough the effectiveness of the learning environment and the valuable role this plays in developing pupils' skills and understanding.

Recommendations

- R1 Address the well-being issue identified by the team during the inspection relating to the state of repair of the school playground
- R2 Ensure that activities develop pupils' independent skills successfully
- R3 Improve the learning environment for younger pupils to ensure that there are greater opportunities for them to develop their skills through play and exploration
- R4 Develop the school's curriculum to ensure coherence across all areas of learning and experience

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Nearly all pupils enter school with knowledge and skills below expectations. As they move through the school most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible for free school meals, make suitable progress from their starting points. Pupils in the observation classes make good progress in line with their individual targets.

Most pupils develop their listening and speaking skills well. They approach confidently and chat happily to visitors. They pay good attention to instructions, take turns, and wait for their time to speak. Most older pupils listen to the views of others and work together in pairs well. Pupils in the observation classes make particularly good progress in the development of their communication skills. For example, most pupils communicate effectively through gesture, pictures, or speech.

Most pupils develop suitable reading skills as they move through the school. Younger pupils begin to use their phonetic knowledge to decode unfamiliar words. They enjoy sharing books, talk excitedly about the characters and begin to use the pictures as clues to support them to make sense of what they are reading. As they progress in their reading skills, they vary the tone of their voice to engage the listener and read with increasing fluency, paying good attention to punctuation. Generally, pupils enjoy reading and have a good recall of familiar stories they hear in school. Pupils in the observation classes show an interest in books and stories. The younger pupils turn pages of a book independently while older pupils read a range of familiar word. However, many older pupils in the mainstream classes are not always confident in their phonetic knowledge to work out unfamiliar words or use known reading strategies when they get stuck.

Overall, pupils' writing skills are developing appropriately. Many younger pupils enjoy making marks and attempt to write their names and those of familiar adults. As they progress, they begin to form letters correctly and neatly. They spell simple words and make plausible attempts at spelling unknown words. Most older pupils use simple punctuation and capital letters in their writing. They write for a range of purposes and cover a wide range of genres and match them appropriately to their audience. However, as pupils move through the school, they do not develop the skills to write independently at length or have sufficient opportunities to write their own story ideas to further develop their imaginative and creative writing skills.

Pupils' Welsh language skills are a strength of the school. Most younger pupils, including those in the observation classes, understand and use simple Welsh vocabulary and phrases well. Most older pupils begin to use Welsh confidently in their play and activities and when talking with their friends and teachers. They ask simple questions accurately and read simple familiar sentences based on the focus for the week. A few more confident pupils begin to extend their replies using connectives.

Overall, pupils' counting and number skills develop well. Younger pupils begin to count to 10 and older pupils count in two, fives and tens to sixty. Many older pupils solve number problems including addition and subtraction and begin to understand

the meaning of equal when dividing into sets. A few pupils recognise and use the division sign in the recording of their work. As pupils develop in their understanding of number, many apply their knowledge to other contexts, such as measure and weight, successfully. Most younger pupils develop a good knowledge of two-dimensional shapes and their properties and begin to gain an understanding of sorting and classifying objects, such as when sorting toys at tidy up time. However, generally throughout the school there are limited opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge to develop their problem-solving skills.

As they move through the school, pupils make good progress with their digital skills. The youngest pupils use simple programs effectively and access a range of apps independently. By the time they reach Year 2, pupils log onto a variety of platforms and use these to enhance their learning. They develop their data handling and coding skills effectively. For example, they set a route for the bear to reach the honey pot using programmable toys.

Generally, most pupils' physical skills are developing well. The youngest pupils thread small items onto pipe cleaners and use tools to make marks and cut shapes out of playdough. Older pupils develop core strength and balance in PE lessons, for example when balancing items on their heads and manoeuvring around obstacles. Many pupils in the observation classes develop their physical skills successfully and show enjoyment when playing on the large outdoor play equipment.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils' well-being is at the heart of the school's work. All staff work well to create a caring community to ensure that pupils and their families are supported sensitively when in need. Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure and are confident that adults and other pupils will help them if they have a problem or are upset. They enjoy coming to school and feel they are treated fairly. Nearly all pupils enjoy their weekly lessons on well-being where they learn how to regulate their emotions and consider their dreams and goals.

Overall, most pupils' behaviour is good across the school. They greet visitors warmly and politely and have a sense of pride about their school. Most pupils behave well in lessons, during break times and as they move around the school. They are kind and considerate to each other and incidents of bullying are extremely rare. Pupils know who to talk to if they have concerns or worries and have the confidence that they will be listened to. Most pupils are polite and courteous to staff, each other, and visitors to the school.

Most pupils are interested in their work and engage with new and unfamiliar experiences and ideas in a positive way. Many pupils settle quickly to tasks and work purposefully in group activities. Many collaborate well and show respect and care for the ideas of others when working in pairs and groups. They play co-operatively, take turns, and support each other well. They act considerately towards other pupils and adults. However, a few older pupils find it challenging to maintain concentration particularly in whole class activities.

Generally, pupils respond positively to teachers' feedback about how they can improve their work. Most pupils enjoy opportunities to contribute to suggestions about how and what they learn. When given the opportunity, many older pupils work collaboratively together showing perseverance and resilience in completing tasks.

However, across the school the opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of perseverance and resilience are limited.

Many pupils begin to develop their understanding of their place in the world through activities such as investigating fair trade foods. They begin to understand what they can do to help others through raising funds for Children in Need and Red Nose Day. They understand the purposes of rules, rewards, and consequences through their class charters. They learn about children's rights and understand how everyone should be treated fairly. A majority of pupils understand the importance of keeping themselves healthy through eating healthily and taking physical exercise. Most older pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online and recognise the importance of reporting immediately anything they see that they are uncomfortable with.

Older pupils, including those with ALN, have opportunities to take on suitable leadership roles within the school. For example, the 'Little Leaders' within the older classes promote good manners, reminding pupils of the school values and encouraging them to use Welsh in their play. Members of the school council help the headteacher make decisions about the school. For example, they influence choices about which playground games to purchase.

Teaching and learning experiences

All staff have warm and positive working relationships with pupils. They celebrate pupils' successes and use praise effectively to manage pupils' behaviour and to encourage them to try new things and to sustain interest in tasks. They model language well and there is a focus across the school on extending pupils' vocabulary by encouraging them to use new and interesting words related to their topic.

At the start of sessions, teachers recap prior learning well and often show pupils' work from other groups that has been effective so that they have a model to follow and are aware of the teacher's expectations for the work that day. There are very effective partnerships between teachers and support staff that ensure that they work towards common goals when leading activities. In general, staff use questioning well to extend pupils' learning. Feedback to pupils is timely and purposeful. When working directly with groups, staff constantly remind pupils about their expectations for high quality pieces of work.

When involved in more independent work, older pupils are not always sure about what they need to do and do not complete work of the same quality as when supervised by an adult. On occasions, independent activities do not match pupils' stage of development. In nursery and reception, pupils' work is often over-directed by an adult and pupils do not develop their independent skills successfully at an early age. For example, staff do not provide enough opportunities at snack time for pupils to make choices or to help to prepare their snacks. In the observation classes, staff have a good understanding of pupils' individual needs and provide bespoke activities to support these needs effectively.

Leaders have taken a considered approach to developing their school curriculum with a primary focus on developing the provision for literacy and numeracy skills across the school. Staff work collaboratively, sharing ideas, and develop an appropriate range of learning experiences for the pupils. Overall, curriculum leaders ensure that plans show appropriate coverage. They are beginning to plan for a more

holistic approach to designing their curriculum. However, this approach is at an early stage of development.

The school is beginning to take advantage of opportunities to enrich the curriculum through the use of visits and visitors. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to visit their local areas, and visitors to the school bring an interesting range of experiences for the pupils to enjoy. For example, a local brass band trio as part of the St David's Day celebrations support pupils' appreciation of wider cultural activities. Leaders are beginning to introduce a range of beneficial enrichment activities through the school's immersion days. These experiences allow pupils to experience authentic contexts for learning through special events such as Christmas and Easter.

Staff make good use of the outdoor spaces around the school to support pupils' learning. The well-developed woodland learning area provides pupils with opportunities to learn valuable personal, social, and emotional skills. However, the school does not always plan systematically well enough for the progression of skills across the curriculum or consider well enough how areas of learning link together. The learning environment, particularly for the youngest pupils, does not always promote good quality opportunities for pupils to develop a range of skills such as collaboration and problem solving through their play. As a result, the school does not ensure that pupils have the opportunities to apply and deepen their skills and knowledge and make strong and effective links in their learning.

The school has effective arrangements to develop pupils' Welsh language skills. Teachers deliver specific language sessions with a focus on the phrase of the week and key vocabulary. Staff use Welsh throughout the day in their communication with the pupils. As a result, many pupils use Welsh naturally in their play and interactions.

Staff are developing a positive culture for reading across the school. Leaders have recently introduced a new systematic approach to teaching phonics, and this is supported by beneficial opportunities for pupils to read regularly to staff within the school.

Overall, the school's provision to develop pupils' personal, social and emotional needs is appropriate. However, the school's planning for the development of pupils' understanding of diversity and other cultures is less well developed.

Care, support and guidance

The school knows its pupils, their backgrounds and the local community well. Staff have developed a range of effective systems to ensure that pupils and their families receive the encouragement and support they need to thrive at school. The school provides a caring environment, which supports the whole-school community successfully. Staff make sure that they are accessible to families and leaders are approachable if any concerns arise. They communicate regularly through newsletters and a digital platform, which is valued by parents and carers. Leaders offer beneficial opportunities for parents and carers to engage in learning activities with the pupils, such as the weekly 'Reading Café' where they participate in a range of reading-based activities with their children.

Staff enable pupils to make strong contributions to the life of their community and these experiences help them to respect and care for others. Staff promote the importance of good behaviour, courtesy and respect successfully. Most pupils across

the school collaborate well with each other and staff during lessons and around the school. The school makes good use of visitors to enhance the curriculum. For example, a local artist worked with children to produce pieces of art for St. David's Day. The school has a vibrant Welsh ethos that is reinforced by all staff who have been instrumental in raising the profile of the Welsh language and culture throughout the school.

The school's support for pupils with additional learning needs is strong. The school's ALN co-ordinator and class teachers use pupil tracking information effectively to help identify and plan provision to address the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. The ALN co-ordinator works well with class teachers to devise useful one-page profiles of individual pupils and specific plans to support their progress. This helps to ensure that pupils with educational, emotional, social or health needs receive the provision and intervention that suits them most appropriately. As a result, most pupils with ALN are ready to learn and make good progress from their starting points.

The school tracks vulnerable learners well. Staff identify social and emotional needs and target appropriate interventions effectively. Personalised learning programmes match pupils' needs closely and these have a positive impact on their individual progress and achievements. Successful relationships between the staff in the observation classes and mainstream aid pupils' integration into the daily life of the school well. Staff from the observation classes work closely with the ALN Co-ordinator to ensure that their expertise is shared across the school.

The school provides suitable opportunities, for example through regular assemblies, and thoughtful collective worship for pupils to participate in and to reflect on important issues and values. They promote principles that help pupils distinguish between right and wrong, encouraging tolerance and good manners. Teachers ensure that pupils consider core values such as trust, honesty and respect through the curriculum and through the promotion of the class charters. However, staff provide limited opportunities to promote equality and diversity.

The school has good systems for monitoring pupils' attendance and works effectively with outside agencies to promote good attendance. There are effective arrangements to contact the home when pupils are absent. The school has developed effective systems to ensure the safety of all pupils, and all leaders and staff promote an active culture of safeguarding across the school. However, during the inspection, a well-being issue was identified and brought to the attention of the school.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a strong vision for the school that she has communicated well to staff. She is ambitious for all pupils and determined to ensure that the school is an inclusive community where all pupils have opportunities to thrive. She is eager to develop her vision into a whole-school philosophy and is determined to involve all members of the school community in this.

The headteacher has quickly established positive working relationships with pupils, staff, parents and governors. She has high expectations of staff and has implemented systems to ensure that leaders at all levels understand their roles and responsibilities and are accountable for pupils' learning and well-being. Leaders model professional values well. They treat everyone with respect and work diligently to bring about improvements for pupils.

Since her arrival, the headteacher has introduced a range of improvements to the learning environment and provided additional resources to improve provision for pupils. While this work is at an early stage of development, it has already had a beneficial impact on pupils by providing resources that represent the diverse nature of the school community.

There is purposeful communication with parents and carers who appreciate the information and support they receive. The headteacher is visible and approachable and parents value this. The newly created space for staff to meet with parents provides a welcoming and relaxing atmosphere to discuss pupils' learning and wellbeing.

Governors have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They provide good support to the school and monitor financial spending effectively. They have a clear understanding of their responsibilities as governors and have identified areas in which they need to hold the school to account, such as in ensuring that all pupils make the progress of which they are capable. This work is at an early stage of development. Governors ensure that the school has suitable arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

There are suitable arrangements to evaluate the work of the school and to identify areas for improvement. Since her arrival, the headteacher has made appropriate use of external consultants to support this evaluation. Leaders at all levels have taken a lead role in assessing their areas of responsibility and have contributed effectively to a whole-school evaluation of progress towards the implementation of Curriculum for Wales. The headteacher evaluates plans for improvement regularly to ensure that the school is working towards the correct priorities and is making suitable progress towards these.

There is a clear focus on addressing national priorities, such as promoting the Welsh language, delivering a new curriculum and improving pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Leaders make effective use of grants, including the pupil development grant, and partnerships with charities and agencies to minimise the effects of poverty on the lives of pupils. For example, the school has worked with a local reading charity to provide access to books for pre-school and adult members of families. This helps to give reading a high profile and supports the school in its drive to develop a love of reading for all its pupils.

Since the headteacher has taken up her post, she has ensured that staff have good quality opportunities for professional learning linked to the school's priorities and to their targets for improvement. For example, staff in the observation classes have valued the opportunities to be involved in training about pupils' communication and this has led to improved provision to develop pupils' skills in this area. The headteacher has begun to introduce opportunities for staff to visit other schools to see and discuss different approaches to teaching and learning. This is still at an early stage of development, but leaders have identified this as a priority and are committed to developing greater opportunities for this important aspect.

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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