



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

**A report on**

**Blaenbaglan Primary School**

**Maes-Ty-Canol  
Baglan  
Port Talbot  
SA12 8YF**

**Date of inspection: June 2023**

**by**

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

## About Blaenbaglan Primary School

Name of provider	Blaenbaglan Primary School
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	302
Pupils of statutory school age	222
Number in nursery classes	45
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%)	11.6%
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%)	24.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/02/2015
Start date of inspection	12/06/2023

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

Blaenbaglan Primary School is a happy, caring and inclusive school, that places high priority on the well-being of its pupils. The school is a highly supportive learning environment, where pupils develop very positive attitudes towards their learning. Pupils feel safe in school, and value the support they receive from staff. They show high levels of interest in their lessons and participate enthusiastically in a range of pupil voice groups. There are strong relationships between pupils and staff.

Across the school, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite and courteous to adults and show kindness and care for one another. They listen carefully to instructions and respond in an articulate fashion. Pupils in the school make strong progress in their learning, including those in the school's learning support centres (LSCs). However, the quality and organisation of the learning environment across the school do not always allow pupils to develop their independent skills well enough.

The staff feel valued, and work well together to plan a broad and balanced curriculum. The school provides a range of worthwhile opportunities for staff to build their professional expertise, and as a result, the school is making suitable progress towards curriculum and additional learning needs (ALN) reform. The school has recently implemented a programme to raise pupils' standards in literacy. However, the effectiveness of teaching and assessment across the school is too variable.

The school has a well-established team of leaders, including proactive governors, that have high expectations of pupils. They place a high priority on safeguarding and carry out self-evaluation processes to improve the school's work. However, the school's evaluation processes do not always identify important aspects that require improvement, for example the need to improve consistency in the quality of teaching and assessment.

## Recommendations

- R1 Sharpen self-evaluation processes to ensure that monitoring identifies all significant aspects for improvement
- R2 Improve the consistency of the quality of teaching and assessment across the school
- R3 Develop the quality and organisation of the learning environment to promote pupils' independence

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

### Learning

During their time at Blaenbaglan Primary School, most pupils, including those with ALN, make good progress in their learning from their individual starting points. Nearly all pupils in the school's LSCs make strong progress against their targets. Many pupils start in the nursery class with levels of communication, personal and social skills at or above the expected level for their age.

Most younger pupils are confident when talking to unfamiliar adults and, by Year 6, most pupils' standards of oracy are strong. They develop highly effective speaking and listening skills and respond articulately to adults and peers. Nearly all pupils discuss their learning purposefully together, using a wide range of vocabulary. Most pupils share their thoughts and opinions enthusiastically, for instance, when discussing the work of famous artists.

Most pupils develop a love of reading and talk enthusiastically about novels, such as a range of Harry Potter books. Younger pupils develop a strong understanding of letter sounds. They handle books as readers, turning the pages and retelling stories they have enjoyed. Many older pupils talk confidently about their favourite authors and have strong comprehension skills. They confidently extract information needed from texts to support their work. Many pupils read and respond to a range of poetry, for example, Year 6 pupils identify and create their own personification based on the poem Last Night I Saw the City Breathing.

Overall, most pupils develop suitable writing skills. Younger pupils enjoy experimenting creatively with mark making using chalk. By Year 2, most pupils use their knowledge of sounds to spell simple words in a series of sentences. By the end of Year 6, most pupils write at length, using lively and imaginative vocabulary for a range of audiences. However, pupils do not develop the skills to write extended pieces of work progressively as they move through the school.

Many pupils develop appropriate levels of Welsh oracy. The youngest children enjoy singing songs and using simple greetings. By the end of Year 2, pupils ask and answer simple questions confidently. Most older pupils are proficient in using more complex sentences and a wider range of vocabulary, for example when talking about why they are excited about taking part in the school's performance.

Most pupils develop strong mathematical skills. Nursery pupils develop their knowledge of capacity in the outdoor area through practical activities using jugs and water. As they move through the school, most pupils develop a good understanding of the four rules of number. For example, younger pupils calculate change accurately when purchasing items in a shop. By Year 6, most pupils apply their skills suitably to solve problems, such as collating, analysing and presenting data. However, many pupils do not apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum as well as they could.

Nearly all pupils have strong digital skills. Many younger pupils programme digital toys confidently and use devices to record their learning experiences. Most older pupils become very proficient in their digital skills and apply these skills well across

the curriculum. Most pupils use a wide range of software to produce and edit text, create graphs and spreadsheets and make creative footage. For example, older pupils use digital software to film and review elements of their production using a range of cinematography skills and techniques, such as long shots and panning. Nearly all pupils save and retrieve their work efficiently.

Most pupils develop their physical skills well as they progress through the school. Many younger pupils ride balance bikes with confidence, whilst many older pupils play a range of team sports collaboratively with increasing skill. They improve their resilience as they practise and refine their balls skills of throwing, catching and fielding.

As they progress through the school, most pupils develop suitable creative skills. They and explore and create paintings based on the work of Welsh artists. Many pupils express themselves confidently through performing arts, such as drama, singing and playing musical instruments.

Many pupils develop their thinking skills well. They reason and justify their decision-making in a range of situations. As they move through the school, they apply a range of these skills to different learning contexts. For example, many younger pupils identify the odd one out successfully, providing reasons for their choices. Many older pupils provide explanations for agreeing or disagreeing with a cartoon character, for example when they discuss whether they agree with a character's method for building a strong structure out of paper.

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

Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in school and know who to go to if they need help. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe online. For example, they know how to use the 'cyber report button' and not to share passwords.

Most pupils understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Older pupils promote the need to eat healthy food effectively. They run 'Fruity Friday' sessions, where they encourage other pupils to eat fruit as a snack. Most pupils understand the importance of taking physical exercise to keep healthy. For example, many pupils participate in school sporting activities and a minority choose to participate in the school walking bus regularly. Many pupils participate in the school's extra-curricular activities, such as sports and homework clubs.

Nearly all pupils respect the school rules. As a result, behaviour across the school is exemplary. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to resolve any issues or problems with their peers, and enjoy participating in work with external providers, such as representatives of the Ospreys Rugby Club. As a result, nearly all pupils show high levels of respect for each other and those around them. They remain calm during disagreements and listen carefully to each other's opinions. They resolve any issues of conflict sensitively and display the school's core values well.

Most older pupils have a good understanding of the rights of the child. They develop this well during class lessons and through participation in the work of the school council. Most pupils, including those with ALN, feel that their voice is valued, and they enjoy participating in various pupil groups. Through these opportunities, they

develop beneficial leadership skills. For example, the school's Criw Cymraeg run weekly school assemblies where they promote the Welsh language and reward other pupils for their use of it. Most pupils are eager to support local charities and organisations. For example, they collect donations for the food bank in Port Talbot.

Across the school, most pupils develop their understanding of environmental issues well. The younger pupils care for and look after class plants by ensuring that they are watered regularly. Older pupils develop a clear understanding of global issues, such as the impact of carbon emissions on climate change. The work of the school eco committee helps to drive this work effectively. For example, pupils conduct regular litter picks to keep the school grounds tidy.

Nearly all pupils, including those in the LSCs, have a thirst for learning and participate well in their lessons. They collaborate well with their peers and undertake most of their work with high levels of enthusiasm. Most pupils develop appropriate life skills. They like to help each other; for instance, the school's sports ambassadors actively encourage younger pupils to participate in sporting activities.

Across the school, most pupils value the verbal feedback they receive from staff. However, they are not always clear about how to improve the quality of their work, particularly their writing.

Pupils are attending school more regularly this year compared to last year, and fewer pupils are persistently absent.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

All staff have warm relationships with pupils that support the caring ethos that permeates the school. They consistently manage pupils' behaviour positively, and as a result nearly all pupils are polite, courteous and well-behaved.

The school's curriculum matches the ethos of Curriculum for Wales appropriately. Teachers provide a range of worthwhile learning experiences based on engaging topics, such as climate change. These contexts for learning provide suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunity to reflect on their learning. However, opportunities for pupils to influence how and what they learn are at an early stage of development.

The school provides systematic opportunities to develop pupils' basic skills in numeracy, and in most aspects of literacy. For example, the school has recently introduced a scheme to develop pupils' understanding of letter sounds and reading. This provides a consistent approach to the development of pupils' reading skills and supports progression of these skills, as pupils move through the school, effectively. Most teachers plan the development of pupils' skills in mental maths and the four rules of number appropriately. However, they do not always provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum.

The school is developing its religion, values and ethics aspects of the curriculum suitably. In addition, teachers plan appropriate opportunities to develop pupils' personal and social skills. This ensures that pupils gain an appropriate understanding

of other cultures and societies across Wales and the world. For example, the school's theme 'Destination Diversity' provides pupils with suitable opportunities to explore the different characteristics of communities across the world.

The school provides a beneficial range of opportunities to develop pupils' musical skills. They collaborate effectively with external providers to provide specialist teaching. This gives pupils worthwhile opportunities to learn how to play a musical instrument such as the violin, cello or flute. The school ensures that finance is not a barrier to learning and does not charge families for this provision. In addition, the school offers valuable opportunities to develop and celebrate pupils' individual talents and skills. This is a notable feature of the school. For example, the school provides regular opportunities for pupils to develop their sporting skills such as gymnastics, and a few go on to take part in national events and represent Wales.

Most teachers are appropriate role models of the Welsh language. They promote Welsh heritage and culture purposefully, such as when older pupils create their own film based on the Welsh legend Catre'r Gwaelod. Provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is good.

Staff working with the youngest pupils provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their physical skills through free play and exploration. For example, the school's range of bikes and the outdoor track enable pupils to develop their balance and co-ordination skills well. However, across the school, the learning environment does not always promote pupils' independence, and learning opportunities do not always enable pupils to develop as independent learners well enough.

As pupils move through the school, teachers are beginning to plan more authentic learning experiences, for example by providing opportunities for older pupils to investigate carbon emissions and their impact. However, a general reliance on worksheets across the school limits the development of pupils' creativity and independence in their learning in areas such as writing. In a few classes, the pace of learning is too slow, and teachers do not always challenge pupils sufficiently to ensure they make the progress they could.

Most staff use a range of questions effectively to check pupils' understanding, challenge thinking and to move learning on. In a few classes teachers use assessment techniques highly effectively. In these classes, teachers ensure that learning intentions are clear and that pupils know what to do to be successful in their learning. They provide worthwhile feedback, which helps to move pupil learning on effectively. However, across the school, the quality of teacher assessment is too variable and does not always ensure that pupils are clear about the next steps of their learning.

Teachers adapt learning suitably to meet the needs of pupils with ALN. They deploy support staff appropriately to provide appropriate interventions to develop pupils' skills. In the LSCs, teachers provide skilfully adapted activities to meet individual pupils' needs. They develop beneficial personalised approaches to teaching, which helps them to remove any barriers to learning and enables them to enhance pupils' well-being effectively.

## Care, support and guidance

The school supports the emotional and social needs of pupils well. It supports pupils to lead work on children's rights effectively, and senior leaders use data from national questionnaires to drive improvement. For example, the school has introduced a fruit tuck shop based on the percentage of pupils who stated they only ate fruit and vegetables once a day.

The school makes effective provision for pupils with ALN. The ALN Co-ordinator has developed effective provision, ensuring that pupils access the appropriate level of support when required. Support staff have strong professional skills. They implement a broad range of intervention strategies effectively in the LSCs and mainstream classes. The ALN Co-ordinator tracks the progress of individual pupils well in relation to their targets, including pupils in the LSCs. The school carries out useful termly pupil progress meetings which include pupils and parents. In these meetings they consider a broad range of helpful information that focuses beneficially on pupils' individual learning needs. The school works effectively with a range of external partners when seeking advice or to secure additional support for pupils. There are detailed plans to meet the needs of pupils with specific requirements.

Daily assemblies promote pupils' spiritual and moral development appropriately through worthwhile reflection activities. Teachers promote values such as respect, empathy and compassion. For example, pupils worked with the local church to create blessing bags for elderly people in the community.

The school provides opportunities for a range of pupil voice groups to meet regularly and develop their leadership skills. For example, the school council benefited from a workshop with a member of the Senedd to compare their roles and responsibilities to those of Welsh ministers, and to develop their understanding of democratic processes. The school provides the eco committee with opportunities to identify improvement priorities, such as planting seed bombs in the butterfly garden.

The school has established effective links with local community and businesses, such as the local steel company. As a result, the school has developed several areas, such as the sensory garden.

The school provides appropriate opportunities to promote sustainability. For example, Year 6 pupils carry out a science experiment exploring the effect of carbon emissions. They use a bioreactor to extract carbon from the air and compare and contrast data sets from two classrooms. They research and produce fact files on clean and sustainable energy, such as wind turbines.

Teachers support older pupils to reflect carefully on what they have enjoyed learning in topic work. They demonstrate where they have made choices in how they present their work, for example when creating fact files on the artist Kandinsky. Overall, however, pupils across the school have limited opportunities to influence what they learn.

There are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of equality and diversity. Teachers use the whole-school 'Destiny Diversity' topic well to explore how different cultures express themselves through the arts. For example, they



provide pupils with opportunities to design and make African tribal masks in Year 3. The school celebrates diversity and individuality through national events such as Odd Sock Day and Happy Pride Month. Pupils have numerous opportunities to develop their understanding of Welsh identity, culture and heritage. For instance, they write stories about the Baglan Giant and Taffy Morgan's Harp in Year 3, as part of their work on Welsh fairy tales. A few pupils write to express their views about what it is to be Welsh and to live in Wales, for example by describing Wales as peaceful and free from war.

The school provides a good range of enrichment opportunities. For example, reception and Year 1 pupils work with a fairy storyteller and a theatre group performing Jack and the Beanstalk, as part of their expressive arts work. As part of their work on the story of Alice in Wonderland, younger pupils visit Gower Heritage Centre.

The school offers pupils the opportunity to participate in a variety of events and tournaments. For example, older pupils enjoy participating in school productions. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities including drama and cricket.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern. The school has appropriate processes to monitor rates of pupils' attendance.

## **Leadership and management**

Leaders at Blaenbaglan develop a shared vision that supports all pupils to be happy and successful. The school vision focuses on developing the whole child and begins to prepare them as lifelong learners. The headteacher creates a positive and caring school environment where the well-being of all is a priority. Relationships across the school are strong, and as a result staff and pupils feel valued.

The headteacher and senior leaders have clear roles and responsibilities, and develop an honest, open and trusting team ethos. Staff feel listened to and contribute positively to the strategic direction of the school's work.

Leaders generally understand the school's strengths and areas for development appropriately. They provide valuable opportunities for staff, pupils, parents and governors to contribute to the evaluation and improvement process. For example, together, they have identified the need to improve communication processes with families. However, leaders do not always use evaluation processes as well as they could. This means that they do not always identify important aspects of provision that require improvement. For instance, they have not identified the effects that a few learning experiences and the learning environment have on limiting the development of pupils across the school as independent learners.

Leaders broadly use self-evaluation findings to identify whole-school priorities and actions for improvement. However, the school does not always identify the important aspects of teaching that require improvement in a timely manner. For example, leaders have not considered the impact of the learning environment on developing pupils' independence well enough.

Leaders plan appropriately to identify actions that improve pupils' progress and well-being. They focus on the relevant areas for improvement, for example developing oracy, reading, and digital skills, and as a result most pupils make strong progress in these areas.

Members of the governing body have a suitable understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They recognise and identify how best their own skills and experience can support the strategic direction of the school, such as in areas of well-being and safeguarding. Governors make appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking amongst pupils. In their role as link governors, they further develop their understanding of how leaders monitor the progress of development priorities. They use a range of evidence effectively, such as talking to pupils and staff, looking at books and visiting lessons. As a result, governors provide suitable challenge and support to school leaders.

Leaders manage the budget and grants effectively. The school funds improvement priorities and professional learning appropriately. For example, the recent purchase of a new reading scheme impacts positively on the progress pupils make. Leaders spend the pupil development grant to improve emotional and social skills. However, currently, leaders do not routinely evaluate the impact this has on the progress pupils make.

The school addresses national and local priorities effectively. For example, through the implementation of Curriculum for Wales, leaders are developing a shared understanding of progression across the school and cluster. Leaders ensure that the school complies with ALNET reform and that all staff promote an inclusive learning environment. As a result, most pupils including those with ALN make strong progress from their starting points. Leaders recognise the importance of continually making improvements to Welsh language provision. Through effective partnership with the local authority, leaders and the Criw Cymraeg support the development of pupils' oracy skills in Welsh. Leaders have a sound understanding of their responsibilities in relation to keeping pupils safe and have established a strong safeguarding culture across the school.

Leaders prioritise professional learning for all staff and governors. When planning improvement priorities, leaders carefully consider the role professional learning plays in developing all staff to contribute to secure improvements effectively. Leaders use performance management suitably to identify whole-school professional learning needs. In addition, individuals access their own professional learning to develop their leadership skills, or to improve their approach to meeting the needs of individual learners within their class. Leaders use partnerships effectively to provide a wide range of professional learning for staff through their work with cluster schools and local universities, which support staff in developing their knowledge and understanding of aspects of the Curriculum for Wales.

## 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.

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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