



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

**A report on**

**Pantysgallog Primary School**

**Pant  
Dowlais  
Merthyr Tydfil  
CF48 2AD**

**Date of inspection: March 2022**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh.**

## About Pantysgallog Primary School

Name of provider	PANTYSGALLOG PRIMARY SCHOOL
Local authority	Merthyr Tydfil
Language of the provider	English Medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	324
Pupils of statutory school age	201
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	76
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average  <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 21.3%)</i>	23.8%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a)  <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 20.6%)</i>	11.4%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	May 2016
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	08-07-2014
Start date of inspection	
Additional information	

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](https://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

Pantysgallog Primary School is a happy, inclusive school that places a high priority on the well-being of its pupils. Staff are ambitious for their pupils and help them to develop positive attitudes to learning.

Most pupils make good progress from their starting points and there is effective provision for pupils with additional learning needs. Overall, pupils make strong progress in developing their skills in English and mathematics, but they do not always apply these skills well enough in their topic work. Pupils have a strong voice in the school and thrive in their roles as learning coaches. They contribute well to a variety of groups and committees and can give examples of where their influence has had a positive impact on school life.

The curriculum is designed around the pupils' needs and over time helps them to develop a strong understanding of their local and wider community and their place in the world. A strength of the school is the focus that practitioners have on evaluating and improving the quality of teaching. This is having a positive impact on outcomes for pupils.

The headteacher provides strong leadership and is well supported by other senior leaders. Governors know the school well and ask challenging questions about decision making when required. There is a clear sense of everyone working together to provide a wide range of interesting opportunities and experiences that pupils may not have access to outside of school. Innovation is encouraged, but leaders always keep a careful eye on the impact of changes and make decisions in the best interest of pupils.

## Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that pupils deepen and extend their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R2 Strengthen practitioners' understanding of child development to ensure that teaching is always matched appropriately to pupils' developmental needs

## What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare case studies on its work in relation to pupils as learning coaches and talking and reflecting about teaching for dissemination on Estyn's website.

## Main evaluation

### Learning

Many pupils start nursery with skills in language, mathematical development and physical development slightly below those expected for their age. As they move through the school most pupils, including those who are vulnerable and those with additional learning needs, make strong progress from their starting points. While the youngest pupils often find it difficult to listen and interact confidently with adults and explain their ideas, their speech, language and communication skills progress quickly as they move through the school. Older pupils communicate freely and fluently with adults and talk enthusiastically about their school and the topics that interest them. Pupils in the nursery and reception classes listen attentively to stories and participate enthusiastically when joining in and retelling familiar events. For example, using a story map, pupils can recall with expression the story of the Three Little Pigs.

As they move through the school, many pupils develop a good knowledge of letter sounds and use this to decode new and unfamiliar words. In Year 3 and Year 4, a minority of pupils do not read with sufficient fluency and expression to sustain the interest of the listener. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils' reading skills have developed appropriately and most can read expressively, often showing a good understanding of the key ideas within texts.

Pupils' writing is developing well across the school. While pupils' handwriting varies in quality, spelling is generally appropriate to their age and pupils often use good vocabulary choices for effect. They write confidently in a range of styles and for different audiences, often editing their work to improve their vocabulary choices. Generally, pupils' writing skills progress quickly when attempting to write in new genres and there is a discernible improvement between the work that they complete as a trial prior to a unit of work and their final piece. Pupils evaluate their own progress usefully in English lessons, but when they apply these writing skills across the curriculum, they do not always demonstrate the same rigour and quality in their work. Occasionally, teachers expect younger pupils to carry out more formal writing tasks too early in their development and do not give them enough time to talk and explore language before expecting them to start writing.

Pupils across the school make sound progress with their mathematics and numeracy skills. In the nursery classes, most pupils develop their understanding of number appropriately. They recognise numbers to five and count to ten. Through using practical equipment in their play, they develop their understanding of mathematical concepts such as full and empty and by the time they reach the older nursery class they explain that full means that no more can fit into a container. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 work with money to solve simple problems including calculating the change from two pounds. They use a thermometer to measure temperature and are developing an understanding of negative numbers in this context. Older pupils use the four rules of number competently, for example when multiplying two digit and three-digit numbers. They apply their numeracy skills well to solve two and three stage problems, explaining their preferred methods and often responding well to challenges set by teachers to extend and deepen their thinking. However, pupils do

not always have good quality opportunities to apply their numeracy skills at an appropriate level across the wider curriculum.

Pupils develop their skills in Welsh appropriately across the school and show enthusiasm for learning the language. Younger pupils follow simple instructions in Welsh and are beginning to ask and answer simple questions. As they progress through the school, their understanding of the Welsh language develops to include more complex language patterns, including the use of the past tense. Pupils are not always confident when extending their sentences and using a wider range of language patterns. Overall, their progress has been hampered by reduced opportunities to use the language during the pandemic.

Pupils develop their artistic skills very effectively across the school. They create good quality artwork and take pride and care in their drawing, painting and craft work, for example when producing artwork based upon their topic of conservation to be developed into a school mural with the support of a local graffiti artist.

Most pupils use technology naturally and with ease to support their learning in other areas of the curriculum. Younger pupils use programmable toys to improve their understanding of movement and direction in mathematics. Older pupils use digital tools skilfully to collaborate on shared pieces of work that are relevant and engaging. For example, when creating a school app, pupils produce their own music, artwork, healthy recipe ideas and exercise videos to support well-being for families in the school community.

Pupils' physical skills are developing appropriately. The youngest pupils move confidently around the indoor and outdoor classroom and are developing good co-ordination when using painting and drawing tools. As they move through the school, pupils further develop these skills through a good range of play-based activities and after school sports clubs.

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

Nearly all pupils demonstrate high levels of well-being across the school. They engage fully in their learning and are keen to participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities that the school provides. Most pupils have extremely positive attitudes to learning and many follow the guidance of teachers successfully to challenge themselves and reflect on their progress. This culture develops as pupils move through the school and is well embedded for older pupils.

Most pupils demonstrate high levels of respect for each other, their school, and their community. They feel well cared for and show a caring attitude towards others. For example, older pupils take their role as well-being coaches seriously as they support pupils who ask for help.

Pupils feel safe in school. Through the numerous opportunities to discuss their feelings and emotions and through daily well-being check-ins they feel emotionally supported and valued. All pupils are proud of Max, their well-being dog. They enjoy having him in lessons, taking him for walks and stroking him. Pupils say that Max promotes respect, calmness, focus and resilience when they work. Many pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. For

example, they know the importance of protecting their passwords and personal information.

Nearly all pupils develop their leadership and life skills well through a range of pupil voice committees, including the school council. Many present themselves with confidence and clarity whilst undertaking these roles. For example, pupils enjoy working with their peers and the wider community to promote road safety. The Junior Road Safety Officers undertake their role with care and encourage parents and the community to be road aware through their 'Be Bright Be Seen' campaign.

Most pupils know and understand that they have rights as children. The work of the Rights Respecting Committee helps to ensure that pupils learn about children's rights. Members of the committee promote a different right each month through their pupil-led assemblies.

Most pupils enjoy taking part in the school's monthly well-being challenges. These raise pupils' awareness of a range of important issues successfully, such as the promotion of health and fitness through a 'Fit February Selfie Challenge'. Pupils understand the importance of regular exercise to achieve a healthy life. They have a suitable knowledge of the importance of eating a healthy snack and how to make healthy choices relating to diet.

Pupils across the school thrive in their roles as learning coaches and through these develop strong skills of collaboration and communication. They use their areas of expertise well to support the learning and well-being of their peers. This ranges from supporting classmates with their digital skills to providing well-being support.

Nearly all pupils talk enthusiastically about their learning. They describe clearly how they have a say in what they learn. Most pupils have a clear understanding of what they like learning and whom they admire in the world. This information is evident in pupils' individual one-page profiles. Pupils feel empowered, valued, and listened to regarding their wants and needs.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

## **Teaching and learning experiences**

Staff work together to create an engaging curriculum that challenges and enthuses pupils. They plan thoughtfully for learning experiences that reflect the school's ethos and encourage all pupils to widen their understanding of the world around them and to be ambitious for their futures.

Teachers think carefully about the four purposes of the curriculum for Wales and how they can be reflected in their curriculum planning. Consequently, activities support pupils' development towards these wider aspirations purposefully. For example, pupils discuss ethical issues such as global warming and study how public figures raise the profile of these issues worldwide. They think carefully about how they can make a difference in their local area. Practitioners are beginning to develop a shared

understanding of progression across the new curriculum and how the knowledge and skills for their pupils can be planned coherently across the school.

Leaders are keen to incorporate the concepts of belonging and influence into curriculum planning by using past events to help pupils to develop an understanding of the rich history of the town they live in. Practitioners think carefully about how to weave opportunities for visits and trips into their planning to enhance learning. For example, older pupils visit a regional rugby club to support their work on a digital well-being app, and they camp and hike in the local area to discover the wonder of the natural landscape around them. As a result, pupils are developing a strong sense of belonging to their community's past as well as its present.

All staff have warm relationships with their pupils. They provide an inclusive ethos where every pupil feels valued. This ensures that nearly all pupils, including those who are vulnerable or have additional needs, are motivated to learn. Teachers and support staff have high expectations of behaviour. They use praise and encouragement appropriately and this creates a calm, hardworking environment where pupils feel confident to ask for support.

A majority of teachers and support staff use Welsh at an appropriate level to model the language for pupils. They are improving provision for Welsh across the school and encourage pupils to use Welsh socially. The school provides good opportunities to enrich pupils' learning in Welsh through the cluster annual eisteddfod and through partnership work with the Welsh department of the local secondary school.

Provision for independent play in nursery and reception classes and most other younger classes is generally appropriate. As a result, many pupils access a range of resources that are continuously available to them independently. At times, teachers do not demonstrate a secure understanding of child development, which results in an overly formal approach to the teaching of skills, such as writing, before pupils are developmentally ready.

Outdoor learning provision is suitable across the school. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 use the mud kitchen to create their own 'food'. Older pupils have access to a wide range of outdoor play provision such as table tennis, basketball and a zip wire. This helps pupils to develop their physical skills appropriately.

In most classes, teachers model learning well. They provide pupils with useful examples of what a good piece of work looks like, and these are often displayed on the class learning walls. Most staff use questioning effectively to recap on previous learning, to check understanding and to move learning forward. They give pupils useful guidance for success. Many pupils follow this guidance to support their learning appropriately and to challenge themselves to attempt more difficult work.

The whole school approach to assessment is appropriate for most pupils. Teachers provide worthwhile oral feedback in all learning situations. As pupils move through the school, they become more aware of the success criteria for lessons and are beginning to take control of their learning. For example, using a choice of three learning stage activities in challenge, understanding and progress time, pupils select the appropriate level of work, reflect on their learning, and challenge themselves. This helps them to develop a deeper understanding of their learning. Pupils are

aware of teachers' use of prompts in marking, but written feedback does not give pupils a clear understanding of their strengths and areas for development consistently.

Teachers provide worthwhile opportunities to share information with parents via parent teacher consultation meetings and through a person-centred approach to supporting pupils with additional needs. School reports provide next steps or targets for improvement, but these are not always useful in helping parents understand exactly what their child needs to do to improve.

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

The quality of care, support and guidance of pupils is a strength of the school. Staff and pupils show a high level of care and respect for each other, which in turn assists in creating an inclusive learning community. The school's values of honesty, happiness, equality, friendship, independence and challenge are well understood by the older pupils and have a positive influence on pupils' attitudes and behaviours. There is a strong emphasis on inclusion and developing pupils' understanding of their human rights. As a result, pupils have a good appreciation of equality, fairness and justice and how these concepts relate to their day-to-day lives.

Pupil voice is well developed throughout the school. There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to take an active part in decision-making and leadership. Staff and leaders listen carefully to the views of pupil groups and they have been successful in developing aspects of the school's work including the school environment and supporting pupils in their understanding of children's rights. Pupils play an important role in influencing their own learning and are routinely asked to think about aspects of topics they would like to investigate further. Pupils' ideas are recorded on 'Pupil Voice, Pupil Choice Boards' in every classroom. Pupils are encouraged to think about all areas of the curriculum when considering what they would like to study further.

The school actively seeks to promote the self-esteem of all its pupils. For example, every pupil is a learning coach and is tasked with helping other pupils. Learning coaches include pupils who take a lead in showing others how to tie their laces, be kind, use information technology or learn their times tables. This approach promotes team spirit in the class and results in pupils feeling a sense of purpose over and above their own learning and progress.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is a strength of the school. There are effective systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress and arrangements for identifying and responding to the needs of specific pupils are rigorous. Where appropriate, the school liaises well with external specialist agencies to support pupils and their families. The additional learning needs co-ordinator helps teachers and support staff to tailor provision to meet the needs of all pupils by implementing a wide range of intervention programmes. The school has increased its provision to support pupils' mental health and well-being. For example, since the pandemic more staff have trained to support pupils with their emotional well-being and routinely provide children with opportunities to talk to staff when needed.

Regular physical education sessions and a wide range of extra-curricular sports provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to enjoy the benefits of exercise. Older pupils are currently involved in a digital project with a regional rugby team to foster aspirations for leading healthy lifestyles through the creation of an app. This has been created by pupils for pupils and demonstrates a range of activities that promote health and well-being.

The school monitors pupils' attendance appropriately and addresses persistent absence well. The systems to support and challenge low attendance are robust and have resulted in improved levels of attendance.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. The school's arrangements to keep pupils safe meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school that is based around promoting pupils' well-being, ensuring that all pupils have high quality opportunities for learning and that staff and pupils share a sense of ambition for what pupils can achieve. He leads by example and has high expectations of all staff.

Senior leaders support the headteacher well and the senior management team collaborate strategically to drive improvements in identified areas. There is a strong culture of sharing leadership roles among staff at all levels and the headteacher empowers staff to be innovative. Recently, teachers have been encouraged to carry out research projects to test strategies that they think will improve their teaching and outcomes for pupils. The headteacher ensures that the effectiveness of these strategies on improving pupils' progress is evaluated thoroughly before leaders include them as part of a whole school approach to learning. For example, a newly qualified teacher asked to trial a challenge, understanding and progress approach with her class and, as it was effective, she was then asked to take the lead role in disseminating this approach to other classes.

There is a strong culture of talking about teaching approaches developing at the school. Teachers work in groups to improve their classroom practice in a supportive way and to learn from each other. Leaders encourage staff to discuss and reflect on their teaching methods and to seek advice about ways to improve. Linked to this, leaders offer teachers useful opportunities to change their class responsibility frequently to develop their skills across the whole school. Where this works effectively, teachers have a mentor in a parallel class who has experience and expertise in teaching this age group. In the few cases where it is less successful, teachers do not have enough time to consolidate their knowledge of the stage of development or teaching approaches required for specific age groups. In addition, they do not always receive enough professional learning in relation to this prior to moving class.

Self-evaluation procedures are robust and based firmly on first-hand evidence. They focus appropriately on pupils' progress and well-being. Leaders set priorities for areas to improve effectively in line with their analysis of a wide range of evidence. The culture of evaluating all initiatives rigorously is embedded at the school.

Financial management is effective and spending decisions link appropriately to improvement priorities. The pupil development grant is used suitably to support vulnerable pupils. For example, it has funded more practitioners to be trained to support pupils' emotional well-being.

Arrangements for the management of staff performance are appropriate. Targets link well to the school's priorities and ensure a collaborative approach to improvement among staff. There is a comprehensive offer for professional learning and a positive culture to promote this across the school. All staff are eager to seek and access opportunities for professional development and there are many examples where this is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and well-being.

The headteacher knows the local community well. Staff are very conscious about the cost of visits and equipment and the impact that this can have on families. They try to mitigate this by subsidising school visits and equipment. For example, the school funds a blazer for every pupil in Year 5 and 6 to provide a sense of belonging and cohesion for these pupils. During the pandemic, staff worked with a local shop to pack and distribute food parcels to help families in need of support. Communication and relationships with parents are strong and parents told us that they particularly like the feedback they get about school events through social media.

Governors are very knowledgeable about the work of the school and provide a suitable level of challenge to senior leaders in addition to providing effective support. They ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

## 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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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