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

A report on

Milford Haven Community Primary

Priory Road
Milford Haven
Pembrokeshire
SA73 2EE

Date of inspection: November 2022

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Milford Haven Community Primary

Name of provider	Milford Haven Community Primary
Local authority	Pembrokeshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	653
Pupils of statutory school age	503
Number in nursery classes	80
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%)	26.4%
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%)	27.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	2.2%
Date of headteacher appointment	07/11/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	14/11/2022

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

Most pupils in Milford Haven Primary School behave well. They are courteous to each other, to staff and to visitors. Staff at the school have created an inclusive, nurturing environment where pupils feel safe and cared for. They support the well-being of pupils well and engage effectively with their families. Teachers and teaching assistants deliver a good range of interventions to support pupils' emotional health and this is having a positive impact on pupils' well-being.

As pupils move through the school, the progress they make is inconsistent. This means that too many pupils do not develop their skills in literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) or Welsh well enough. These weaknesses have a negative effect on their work in other areas of the curriculum. The school is beginning to use an increasing range of visits and visitors to enhance pupils' experiences. Pupils enjoy these and respond positively, talking enthusiastically about what they have learnt. However, the school's curriculum does not offer opportunities for pupils to develop and use their skills in a co-ordinated and progressive manner. Across the school, staff have forged strong working relationships with pupils. However, the quality of teaching across the school is too variable. Often, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low and the pace of learning is too slow. Teachers regularly structure activities too tightly and guide pupils' learning too much. This hampers pupils' capacity to become independent learners who can work things out and think for themselves. Teacher's feedback to pupils does not always help them to understand what they need to do in order to improve their work.

Over time, leaders have not monitored the school's work robustly enough. This means that they have not identified major shortcomings in the school's work or put in place actions to address them. Consequently, important national priorities such as planning to implement the curriculum for Wales are still at an early stage of development. Members of the school's governing body are keen and enthusiastic but, due to an insufficient number of members and an overreliance on the views of leaders about the quality of the school's work, they have been unable to provide effective support and challenge to the school.

Recommendations

R1 Establish an effective leadership and governance structure

R2 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment to challenge all pupils consistently

R3 Improve pupils' reading and writing skills

R4 Improve pupils' numeracy and ICT skills

R5 Establish effective self-evaluation, school improvement and professional learning processes

R6 Develop a curriculum that engages pupils and develops their knowledge, skills and understanding systematically and progressively

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress on a termly basis.

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils begin school with knowledge, skills and understanding that are at, or below, those expected for their stage of development. As they move through the school they make inconsistent progress, and by the time they reach Year 6 many have not made strong enough progress in many areas of their learning. Many pupils with additional learning needs make appropriate progress towards their individual targets.

When they begin in nursery, many pupils communicate with adults and with their classmates in a basic way. They share simple information about the activities that they have been doing and recall events from their own life. By Year 3, many pupils express their ideas appropriately within a small group, taking turns and listening to their peers suitably. However, a few remain reluctant to speak to others about their experiences. When they reach Year 6, many pupils listen politely and with interest to adults. They share their ideas with their class appropriately. A few pupils ask questions of others to gain their viewpoints or develop other's ideas in group discussions. However, a minority do not express themselves clearly or in sufficient detail, and often struggle to put their thoughts into words well enough.

Throughout the school, a majority of pupils do not develop their reading skills well enough. In nursery and reception, pupils enjoy listening to stories and a majority begin to develop an early understanding of letters and their matching sounds. However, by Year 2 around half still have difficulty trying to sound out quite simple unknown words and struggle to read short texts appropriately. By Year 6, a majority of pupils read aloud age-appropriate texts. However, they struggle to understand fully, or take away information from, the texts they have read. A very few have useful higher order reading skills, for instance the ability to skim or scan texts to find particular information. A minority of pupils do not notice when they make errors when reading, even when this means the sentence does not make sense.

In nursery and reception, most pupils begin to make marks in their play to represent writing. A minority write a few letters and short words clearly, such as writing their name. By Year 2, a majority of pupils are beginning to communicate purposefully in writing, for example writing a few simple sentences about what they like to do. They generally write words in a logical sequence, following a given model. However, a majority still need significant adult help to enable them to write complete sentences. They do not spell basic words accurately or use capital letters and full stops consistently. By Year 6, many pupils understand how to structure different genres of writing, such as persuasive texts and stories. A majority understand how to use descriptive and emotive language appropriately, such as when using a rhetorical question to be persuasive. However, around half still do not write at length well enough. They change tenses in paragraphs, do not use more complex sentence structures or use basic punctuation accurately. A minority of pupils' spelling skills remain poor. These weaknesses have a negative effect on their work in other areas across the curriculum, such as when attempting to record findings in a science investigation.

Few pupils develop strong Welsh language skills. Whilst many pupils use a few simple words and phrases confidently, in general, pupils' skills develop poorly as they move through the school. In Year 1 and Year 2 pupils greet each other saying 'bore da' or 'sut mae' and in Year 4 many pupils ask a few basic questions, such as 'who are you' and recall suitably a few Welsh words to describe the weather. However, by Year 6, many pupils use similar words and phrases to younger year groups and do not develop their skills sufficiently well.

A majority of pupils make an appropriately positive start to developing their early number skills. However, their skills develop slowly as they move through the rest of the school. By Year 3, a majority of pupils are confident when adding and subtracting numbers to 20 and in using their 2 and 10-times tables. However, a minority of pupils still work mostly with numbers below 10 and a few still do not form numbers correctly. In Year 6, a majority of pupils have adequate mathematical skills. They have a sound understanding of basic fractions and can simplify more complex fractions well. However, a minority struggle to understand basic mathematical terms, such as multiple and difference. They have difficulty in using their mathematical understanding to solve problems, such as when using their understanding of decimals to calculate amounts of money.

Many younger pupils develop their digital skills suitably to help support their learning in other curriculum areas. However, few pupils develop their skills well enough to, for example, combine text and images or use simple charts to record information. By Year 6, many pupils understand well how to use the internet to search for information, and how to access basic apps to create presentations and documents. Many know how to send a basic email and record simple, short films. A very few pupils have a limited understanding of spreadsheets. Overall, pupils' understanding of important areas of ICT, such as spreadsheets and databases, is weak.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

A strong feature of the school is the positive, caring working relationship that exists between staff and pupils. Pupils are proud of their school and its nurturing environment. Most show a high level of respect for each other, their school, and their community. They feel that all staff care about them and, as a result, most pupils feel safe and valued.

Most pupils understand how to keep safe when online. They know not to share passwords or personal data and can talk about the dangers of social media and texting, such as the possibility that personal information could be hacked. Most pupils have a strong understanding of the need to keep fit and eat healthily. For example, they can explain why it is beneficial to eat a balanced diet and why it is not sensible to drink sugary drinks. Most pupils enjoy taking part in physical exercise and attending extra-curricular activities, such as the dance and football clubs.

Pupils have a few opportunities to influence what and how they learn. In the reception class, pupils help to choose the activities that are available within their learning areas. However, opportunities for pupils to influence wider school life are minimal, both within the classroom and particularly at a whole school level. Pupils do not have the chance to take on leadership roles and play a full part in the life of the school.

Most pupils behave well in classes and around the school. Older pupils are courteous when addressing adults and they engage readily in conversations. Pupils respond well to established routines, for example they move sensibly from the playground into the classroom, settle quickly and are ready to engage and contribute to lessons. In a very few cases, the standard of behaviour is below that expected, and adults do not always address these behaviours well enough.

Most pupils co-operate appropriately when working in pairs and in groups. Most value and respect their peers. For example, pupils in Year 1 collaborate well when playing in large groups, they wait at the bike stop for their turn and share resources maturely. Year 3 pupils take turns and listen carefully to each other during group reading sessions, demonstrating both patience and support. Many pupils take a real interest in school and their work. They talk enthusiastically and confidently about what they like to do. However, a minority struggle to sustain concentration to complete tasks and lack the confidence and resilience to tackle more challenging work. Overall, pupils' independent learning skills are limited, and they often turn to an adult quickly when faced with difficulties, before drawing upon other strategies, such as thinking about previous learning.

In general, pupils are responsive to the limited feedback they receive from teachers and, when prompted to do so, they improve their work appropriately. However, due to a lack of opportunity and experience, most pupils have little understanding of how to evaluate their own or their peers' learning effectively and, as a result, do not always know how to improve their work well enough.

Pupils are attending school more regularly this year compared with last year, when the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact nationally on school attendance. Considerably fewer pupils are persistently absent this year compared to last year.

Teaching and learning experiences

Teachers plan a suitable range of activities to support learning both indoors and outdoors. In the younger classes, pupils regularly access learning in the outdoor areas. For example, pupils in Year 1 learn about woodland creatures when using leaves and twigs from the forest area to make hedgehogs and bats. In Year 3, pupils organise stones into groups to develop their multiplication skills. However, staff do not use the extensive outdoor spaces in the Prioryville site well enough to support the curriculum.

The school does not have a clear, shared vision for the development of the Curriculum for Wales. Staff have not engaged well enough with professional learning designed to support the co-construction of a purposeful, engaging, broad and balanced curriculum. Teachers plan learning through termly themes, for example 'Home is where the Heart is', 'Time Machine' and 'Disaster Zone'. These themes, together with a number of published resources form the basis for planned learning. However, the curriculum does not build well-enough on what pupils have learned before and, as a result, does not develop pupils' knowledge, skills or experiences effectively enough as they move through the school.

The curriculum is enhanced by an increasing range of visits and real-life experiences. For example, reception pupils visit the local shops to begin to develop an

understanding of money as they purchase ingredients to make gingerbread. In Year 2, pupils visit Henllys Castle to develop their understanding of the past. Year 6 take part in activities with the emergency services, and this helps raise their awareness of how to stay safe. Pupils respond well to visitors to the school. The recent visit of a bat ranger from Pembrokeshire National Park enabled staff to develop an interesting range of purposeful learning activities to develop pupils' oracy and creative skills. However, teachers plan too few opportunities for pupils to progressively develop and use their literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum. As a result, pupils do not improve and apply these skills well enough.

Teachers provide a few opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the cultural, linguistic and diverse nature of Wales. For example, pupils in Year 2 plan and lead the school's Eisteddfod. However, the school does not plan well for the structured development of pupils' Welsh language skills. As a result, most pupils do not make suitable progress in developing their communication skills in Welsh.

Teachers and support staff have very positive working relationships with pupils and most staff manage pupils' behaviour well. In a minority of sessions, teachers engage pupils well and involve them in their learning. They plan learning activities suitably, have clear learning objectives and provide pupils with useful opportunities for independent or collaborative learning. In these lessons, teachers use effective questioning skilfully to help move learning forward and they match learning well to pupils' abilities. However, the quality of teaching across the school varies too much and a majority of sessions are characterised by low expectations of what, and how much, pupils can achieve. In these cases, teachers plan too many low-level tasks, or rely on video resources to communicate important teaching points. In a majority of classes, teachers structure sessions and guide learning too much, causing pupils to become over reliant on instructions and support from adults. They do not use questioning well enough to extend pupils' thinking or to check pupils' understanding. Their implementation of the 'must, should, could and challenge' approach fails to challenge pupils consistently or meet the needs of those who need support, preventing pupils from making the progress of which they are capable. Throughout the school many teachers do not adapt tasks well enough to meet the needs of all pupils.

Feedback to pupils is not helpful enough. Staff do not implement assessment for learning strategies consistently across the school. Teachers do not engage sufficiently well with pupils' learning activities to be able to identify and correct misconceptions and offer ways forward. In a few cases, teachers' written feedback contains errors. As a result, most pupils do not have a clear understanding of whether they have completed tasks successfully or what they need to do to improve.

Care, support and guidance

Leaders ensure that the school is a caring community that successfully supports the well-being of pupils, promotes their emotional health and develops a sense of belonging and enjoyment for all pupils. The strong culture of safeguarding and the inclusive ethos towards all pupils are notable features of the school. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Co-ordinator provides effective leadership of ALN. She collaborates successfully with a wide range of partners to ensure effective professional development for staff and to develop the most appropriate provision for identified pupils. This includes a wide range of intervention programmes and strategies that effectively target the learning and well-being needs of pupils. Individual action plans identify pupils' learning and emotional needs well. Staff review progress towards targets regularly.

Staff deliver effective support to pupils with ALN during targeted interventions and most pupils make good progress during these sessions. However, too often staff over direct pupils, including pupils with ALN, during general lessons. This prevents them from taking ownership of their learning and developing wider skills, such as resilience and the ability to work independently. Overall, the general provision within lessons does not support pupils of differing abilities to make the progress of which they are capable.

The school's curriculum provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of concepts and values such as diversity, inclusion, and equity. The school teaches pupils to be respectful, tolerant, and empathetic. Staff promote co-operation, reinforce whole school expectations of tolerance and consideration, and expect socially responsible behaviour from pupils. They engage well with national events, such as Children in Need, to provide an authentic context for pupils to develop their values and understanding of the needs of others. However, overall, there are too few opportunities for pupils to ask and explore fundamental questions in sufficient depth.

Daily collective worship does not always provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual beliefs and understanding. These sessions do not promote mindful reflection, they lack routine, and do not encourage pupils to think deeply. Despite this, in a few instances, they do encourage pupils to consider their responsibility to each other and the wider community.

The school provides a limited range of experiences to help pupils to develop an appreciation and understanding of their identity, heritage, and culture. Recent opportunities to explore sustainability in the local area and visits to nearby castles inspire pupils but are not part of a coherent curriculum that develops over time. The school does not provide sufficient meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop as active citizens, for example by contributing to shaping the life and work of the school. Opportunities for pupils to perform and take part in off-site learning activities are yet to fully resume following the pandemic.

Leadership and management

The school has recently been through a turbulent time. Since 2021, it has had three headteachers and the governing body has struggled to fill vacant positions and to fulfil its statutory duties. This turmoil in leadership has hampered the school's ability to make improvements in many important areas, such as in addressing the variable quality of teaching. This has impacted negatively on the progress that pupils make in a majority of cases. The current headteacher took up his role in November 2022 and has not had time to make significant improvements. However, he already displays a strong understanding of the main issues affecting the school's performance.

Over time, leaders have not effectively fulfilled their basic duties in terms of monitoring learning and teaching and addressing shortcomings. For example, the lack of rigour in monitoring standards in literacy has resulted in weak progress in reading and writing for a majority of pupils.

The school's processes for evaluating and improving its own work are underdeveloped. The range of activities leaders use for gathering information are limited, not robust enough, and do not focus well enough on the standards achieved by pupils. They do not involve a sufficiently wide range of staff. The results of monitoring activities do not feed into the improvement planning process effectively. This results in whole school priorities being devised without input from, or the knowledge of, all staff. Consequently, not all staff members are aware of the true picture of the school's strengths and its priorities for improvement.

Governors are enthusiastic about their role and are keen to support the school. They have a good understanding of the school's finances and how to manage the budget. They know how leaders use the pupil development grant and its impact on supporting vulnerable pupils with their emotional development. However, regular low attendance and recent resignations from the governing body mean that they have not always had sufficient numbers to carry out their statutory duties successfully. For example, they have not ensured that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Governors are too reliant on leaders' views about the school's strengths and areas for development, which are not always accurate. This means that they are unable to challenge the school robustly enough and are unaware of the true picture of pupils' progress or issues with the quality of teaching.

Leaders are addressing the national ALN reform successfully. However, the school does not address other national priorities well enough, such as improving pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy, ICT and the Welsh language. The school's progress towards implementing the Curriculum for Wales is still at a very early stage of development, with no clear vision or strategic direction and a lack of a progressive framework for the development of pupils' skills.

Leaders provide staff with a suitable range of professional learning opportunities however these are not always linked well enough with whole school priorities. The impact of professional learning is not monitored effectively, particularly its impact on classroom practice or pupils' learning. This means that it has a limited effect on improving teachers' skills. The school has recently introduced a few whole school initiatives to raise standards, such as a whole-school strategy for the teaching of phonics. However, due to a lack of rigorous monitoring, not all teachers follow this approach. As a result, phonics is taught differently in different age-groups, resulting in variable standards across the school.

Leaders have ensured there are ample classroom and ICT resources to aid teachers in delivering a wide range of educational activities. The outdoor area in the Meads site provides an exciting environment for pupils to engage in creative and imaginative experiences. The outdoor area of the Prioryville site is currently underdeveloped and does not provide an inspiring learning environment.

Leaders have fostered strong relationships with parents, who value the school's open-door policy and the way they can approach staff with any matter. Staff deal particularly well with vulnerable pupils and provide valuable guidance and support for them and their families.

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:

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