



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

A report on

Pontllanfraith Primary School

**Penmaen Road
Pontllanfraith
Blackwood
NP12 2DN**

Date of inspection: November 2022

by

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

About Pontllanfraith Primary School

Name of provider	Pontllanfraith Primary School
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	227
Pupils of statutory school age	159
Number in nursery classes	39
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 21.3%)	28.5%
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 22.2%)	10.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	03/09/2012
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	10/03/2014
Start date of inspection	21/11/2022

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

Pontllanfraith Primary School provides a caring environment for pupils. They feel safe in school and confident to speak to staff if they are concerned or worried. Across the school, pupils' engagement with visitors, staff and each other is a notable feature. Most pupils are polite and treat each other and adults with respect.

During their time in school most pupils make very good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), and those who attend the two special resource base classes make good use of the suitable range of learning experiences on offer and make good progress in most areas of learning from their individual starting points. On the whole, most pupils are well motivated to learn and collaborate successfully in lessons.

Teachers are beginning to develop authentic opportunities which reflect the new Curriculum for Wales and its four purposes. Most lessons engage the pupils well but teaching does not ensure that pupils achieve to the best of their ability at all times. There are few opportunities for pupils to become independent learners. Across most classes, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other areas of learning. As a result, they do not generally use these skills as well as they could.

Leaders have created a strong team ethos amongst staff who support pupils' well-being successfully. They form close working partnerships with many outside agencies. However, communication with parents to strengthen the learning community is less effective.

Leaders, with the support of the governing body, keep the work of the school under review suitably. However, arrangements for monitoring the quality of the school's work and sustaining improvement overtime are less effective. Monitoring activities do not always identify key areas that need improving. For example, leaders have not identified that teaching does not provide sufficient challenge for all pupils or that progress in addressing national priorities, such as developing and implementing the Curriculum for Wales, is limited.

Recommendations

- R1 Develop and implement effective evaluation and improvement processes
- R2 Ensure that teaching supports pupils to develop the full range of skills progressively as they move through the school and that pupils have opportunities to use these skills in their work across the curriculum
- R3 Develop effective partnerships with parents

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will work with the local authority to review the school's progress.

Main evaluation

Learning

Around half of the pupils in the nursery class start school with skills below those expected for their age. As they move through the school many pupils make suitable progress from their starting points. Pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those with ALN make sufficient progress against their targets. However, more able pupils do not achieve well enough. Most pupils in the specialist resource bases achieve well in line with their needs and abilities.

Pupils' oracy skills are a strength. From a very young age in the nursery class, many pupils talk about their learning. For example, they make simple observations about ice being cold and hard whilst playing in the outdoor kitchen. They engage well during carpet sessions and are eager to recall previous number work. As they move to the reception class, they continue to make good progress, developing their communication skills well when taking the role of the vet in the surgery, for example. Pupils continue to build on their oracy skills as they move across the school and by Year 6, they become articulate speakers, giving clear explanations about their work when talking to adults and responding maturely to each other's suggestions and ideas in class.

Many younger pupils make suitable progress from their starting points in developing their Welsh oracy skills. They use basic vocabulary with good pronunciation on a daily basis and respond correctly when questioned. However, from Year 3 to Year 6, although many pupils show enthusiasm for learning the Welsh language, they have limited words and phrases and lack confidence to engage in Welsh conversation.

Across the school, pupils are developing an enjoyment in reading and respond confidently to texts during group reading sessions. They discuss books purposefully and are able to share their reasons for choosing a style of book confidently. Most younger pupils develop good phonics skills and decode unfamiliar words confidently and by Year 2, they read with fluency and expression. Most older pupils use their reading skills well in other areas of the curriculum and use skimming and scanning techniques to research facts, for example about the line of British monarchs and to create a digital presentation about autism spectrum disorder.

In the reception class, pupils begin to experiment with writing and start to form letters suitably. They write simple three letter rhyming words from the class book, spelling most words correctly. By Year 2 many pupils recall the story of 'The Little Red Hen' writing simple sentences purposefully. Overall, progress in developing writing skills is appropriate. From Year 3 to Year 6 many pupils give suitable consideration to the audience and, when given the opportunity, choose appropriate words and descriptive language to write poems about the Second World War. When completing discrete writing tasks, they are able to begin sentences in a variety of ways. However, most pupils do not write at length in other areas of learning often enough.

Many pupils make appropriate progress in developing their mathematics skills. In the nursery class pupils count up to five and make sets of five 'happy friends' correctly. By Year 2, many pupils develop simple calculation skills and use numbers to a

hundred confidently. They are developing a sound understanding of how to construct simple bar charts and can collect information from a pre-prepared pictogram. From Year 3 to Year 6, most pupils develop sound methods of calculation and apply these to discrete problem-solving activities. In Year 6 they calculate fractions and percentages, and use an appropriate range of graphs and charts to organise data. More able pupils have a secure understanding of different measurements and apply this knowledge well. They use digital technology appropriately to check the accuracy of their results. However, most pupils do not apply their numeracy skills to the same level in other subjects as they do in mathematics.

Pupils' digital skills across the school are developing appropriately. Pupils in the nursery class use the interactive white board independently to identify numbers and letters and pupils in Year 2 design a simple moving story board. Nearly all pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 support and extend their learning in class suitably by gathering information from a range of sources and use multimedia and word processing packages to a suitable standard to present and produce work across the curriculum.

Most pupils' physical skills are developing soundly through a variety of purposeful activities. From nursery to Year 2, they develop their skills well through movement lessons and, for example using bikes on the 'yellow brick road'. Pupils continue to build on these skills successfully as they move through the school by taking part in regular planned lessons and activities organised by outside agencies such as visiting football and rugby clubs. Many pupils are developing their creative skills suitably and exploring and experimenting with different media well when planning and designing dragon eyes.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Many pupils including those in the specialist resource base classes have readjusted to school routines well following periods of school closure and disruptions due to staff and pupil illnesses during the pandemic. They behave well during lessons and they are developing respect towards each other when playing at break and lunchtimes. Most pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly manner. They are confident that the staff listen to them and that all adults care for them. Most pupils feel safe in school and have a sound understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

Around the school, most pupils are polite to each other, to staff and visitors and greet them with a friendly comment when holding a door open. Most pupils engage positively in their learning and settle well to their tasks. They listen attentively to their teachers and sustain their concentration well during activities. Most pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to complete a task. Across the school pupils work very well together in pairs and small groups. For example, Year 6 work effectively to expand and enhance their vocabulary when discussing the hidden emotions of a television advert.

Many pupils have an awareness of the skills they need to have to be successful learners. They respond well to written and verbal feedback from teachers. Pupils are developing useful skills to evaluate their own and others work through peer activities. As a result, they confidently identify areas for improvement in their work and this supports their progress well. Most pupils offer support to others, for example by

sharing a strategy with their peers to help them overcome a challenge. They are beginning to develop confidence and resilience when, for example using trial and error to complete the rugby autumn international scoring exercise. Pupils listen attentively to the views of others and deal well with opinions that are different from their own. For example, the very young pupils in the nursery class can discuss and show an appreciation that all families are different. A minority of pupils are beginning to take part in making decisions about their own learning such finding facts about dogs of their own choice after listening to the story of Gelert. However, on the whole, most pupils rely too much on adults to direct them in their learning.

Pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 take part in pupil groups and show a sense of pride when taking on leadership responsibilities such as promoting the Welsh language through the work of the Criw Cymraeg or offering guidance on how to keep safe whilst watching firework displays in their role as the 'Heddlu Bach'. More recently, the Learning Squad has begun looking at the quality of pupils' work and the ways that pupils interact with each other purposefully. However, overall, pupils do not have enough influence over matters that affect them at school.

Many pupils have an appropriate understanding of how they can contribute to society to help others, for example through fund raising activities and attending the village memorial service for those who have lost their lives in war.

Most pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep healthy through eating a balanced diet and taking regular exercise. They know that fruit and vegetables are an essential part of a healthy diet and enjoy taking part in physical activities, for example walking the daily mile and improving their skills during sporting activity sessions.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, staff have created a friendly, supportive and inclusive environment for all pupils to learn. Staff know the pupils well and form respectful relationships with them and provide engaging activities. Teachers and teaching assistants promote and manage good behaviour successfully and, as a result, pupils engage quickly in lessons and are motivated to learn. They encourage pupils to take on new challenges and to try new things. Regular visits, for example by a professional football coach, have enthused girls to take up the sport and they are keen to develop their football skills further by attending their local club.

Learning experiences both in the class and in the outside area for pupils in the specialist resource base are interesting and engaging. Interactive sessions provide valuable opportunities for pupils to be curious, develop their physical skills and interact with their peers and staff to develop their personal and social skills.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They provide clear explanations at the beginning of lessons to ensure that all pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to succeed. The teachers provide valuable written and verbal feedback for pupils and encourage them to assess their own and that of their peers regularly. These activities help the pupils to improve the content of their work and to make progress. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly but do not use this information to identify next steps in learning effectively enough. They do not modify lessons suitably to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can, particularly the more

able. Teaching assistants make valuable contributions to the pupils' learning experiences and well-being.

Most classrooms are stimulating and the valuable displays support the teaching and learning well. The school has extensive grounds with designated areas to promote learning for the pupils in the nursery to Year 2 and planned activities develop the pupils' communication, physical and personal and social skills well. However, in general, staff provide too much structure and over direct learning, which hinders pupils' creativity and independence.

The school has begun to plan a curriculum that matches the principles and ethos of the Curriculum for Wales. Most leaders and teachers are developing an understanding of curriculum reform and are beginning to plan learning experiences that align with the purposes of the curriculum. There is, however, an uncertainty within the school how the curriculum fits together and, as a result, teaching does not always ensure that pupils develop a full range of skills progressively as they move through the school.

The provision for developing pupils' oracy skills in English is a particular strength. A range of experiences and activities ensure that pupils build on their confidence as they progress through the school. The planned daily reading sessions impacts successfully on pupils' comprehension skills and supports other areas of their learning well. Although teachers provide opportunities for pupils to develop discrete literacy and numeracy skills in lessons, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply these in other areas of the curriculum. The provision for developing pupils' extended writing, Welsh language and digital skills are less well developed.

Opportunities for pupils to choose how and what they learn are variable overall. In a few instances pupils have appropriate levels of influence. For example, teachers provide pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 with suitable opportunities to generate questions and to decide how they would like to present their work. Currently, there are very few trips and visits to broaden and enrich pupils' experience.

Care, support and guidance

All staff work well together to create a caring community and a safe learning environment. The school ensures that the health and well-being of pupils is a continuous priority. Staff provide a variety of opportunities for pupils to develop their physical skills successfully in planned lessons and extend these experiences by using the expertise of visiting football and rugby teams. The school has effective arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily and to help pupils to understand what they need to do to look after themselves.

Staff promote the importance of good behaviour, courtesy and respect successfully. Over time, the school's procedures for improving the behaviour of pupils have been effective. Pupils across the school collaborate well with each other and all adults during lessons and around the school.

The school's support for pupils with ALN is strong. Staff track and monitor progress carefully to identify and plan the provision to support the needs of pupils well. The ALN co-ordinator works closely with outside agencies to plan purposeful sessions to

enable pupils to progress in their learning and personal and social development. Capable teaching assistants deliver a wide range of literacy and numeracy programmes as well as prioritising the emotional care of pupils successfully through practical activities. They make a positive and lasting change to pupils' well-being and their ability to learn. The staff from the specialist resource base work closely with the mainstream staff, sharing their expertise to create bespoke support for the specific needs of individual pupils.

The school provides beneficial support for the pupils that attend the specialist resource bases. Teachers and teaching assistants work well with individual pupils and support them appropriately in line with their individual learning needs. The staff have a positive, caring relationship with the pupils that they support. Pupils' targets for improvement clearly show desired outcomes for oracy, literacy, and numeracy, which are amended as pupils make progress. One-page profiles usefully show relevant information about the pupil including background information, what the pupil needs help with and the best way to support them. These provide useful information for staff that work with these pupils. However, the school's arrangements to integrate pupils from the specialist resource bases in whole school activities are less effective.

The school plans a number of activities well to develop pupils' understanding of the culture and heritage of Wales. Pupils study the style of different Welsh artists reflected in the creative artwork displayed around the school. Pupils in Year 6 study the qualities of Owain Glyndwr as a leader and other classes celebrate inspirational, local people, such as Gerwyn Price and Lauren Williams. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about equality and diversity through a whole school anti-bullying campaign and visitors from a local charity to discuss racism. Pupils are beginning to understand environmental change and the part that humans play in this change. The school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn about different faiths from around the world.

Teachers provide a number of opportunities for pupils to influence aspects of the school's life and work. However, many of the groups have recently been re-established. For example, the Criw Cymraeg have a set agenda to encourage more pupils to use their Welsh language around the school. However, it is too soon to measure the effect.

The school has comprehensive systems for monitoring pupils' attendance. They have effective arrangements to contact the home when pupils are absent and work effectively with outside agencies to improve attendance. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher works well with all staff and governors to create a positive and caring ethos in the school. Staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities, work collaboratively and discharge their roles suitably. Senior leaders and staff have recently created a new vision and values for the school, where pupils 'achieve, believe and care'. The school has not shared the values effectively with parents and partners and, overall, it is too soon to evaluate the impact of the new vision on the life and work of the school.

Leaders work together and support each other positively and, relationships between staff are warm and effective. The headteacher knows the staff well and has provided appropriate and sensitive support when needed during the period of the pandemic. Suitable performance management processes are in place although targets do not always link directly with school improvement priorities. Leaders plan opportunities for professional learning suitably and staff share their learning with each other successfully. For example, an action research project on metacognition is having a positive impact on changing classroom practice and developing pupils' ability to reflect on and talk about their learning.

The headteacher has a clear plan of activities for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. This includes scrutiny of pupils' work, learning walks and formal lesson observations. Over time, leaders have identified relevant school improvement priorities, such as improving the quality of pupils' reading skills. Most recently, an analysis of the 'class on the page', school assessment and national test data has led to identifying the need to improve standards of mathematics. Leaders demonstrate the capacity to implement improvement strategy. However, they do not evaluate the impact of this work well enough. Overall, arrangements to evaluate the school's work lack rigour. In general, leaders do not gather a wide enough range of first-hand evidence to make informed evaluations. As a result, leaders do not identify important areas for improvement well enough.

Leaders address some national priorities well. For example, changes in provision for pupils with ALN have been rolled out effectively and this supports the progress and monitoring of these pupils well. The school is beginning to develop its curriculum in line with the Curriculum for Wales. Leaders engage with other local schools in this process and enable staff to develop a map of concepts for the school curriculum. However, this work is not reflected in their planning and as a result the impact on learning is limited.

School leaders and governors manage resources effectively. They produce costed plans to improve the learning environment, but the allocation overall to improve the school priorities is less effective. The school produces suitable spending plans to ensure the grants are used to improve outcomes for pupils. For example, the pupil development grant is used to fund relevant learning programmes and, as a result, vulnerable pupils and those eligible for free school meals make good progress.

Governors are suitably supportive of the school community. They are involved in a range of committees and bring their skills to these roles appropriately. The headteacher provides governors with useful information so that they have a growing awareness of the strengths and areas for development at the school. Governors are beginning to evaluate learning in the school, for example by listening to learners. However, they do not have a full understanding of pupil progress, the quality and effectiveness of teaching to fully support self-evaluation. Governors work appropriately to ensure that the school has suitable arrangements for healthy eating and drinking.

The school seeks to build positive and caring relationships with parents and uses social media to share pupils' learning experiences regularly. However, parents are not given sufficient information about how they can support learning. More recently, parents have not been involved in creating the school's new vision and their input

into the curriculum design has been limited. A few partnerships with the wider community are developing appropriately. For example, a project with a local building company has impacted positively on pupils' understanding of local history. However, overall, partnership work is limited in its extent and effectiveness.

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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