



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

**A report on**

**Gwauncelyn Primary**

**Heol Deg  
Tonteg  
Pontypridd  
RCT  
CF38 1EU**

**Date of inspection: October 2024**

**by**

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

## About Gwauncelyn primary

Name of provider	Gwauncelyn Primary
Local authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	388
Pupils of statutory school age	307
Number in nursery classes	40
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 22.9%)	13.2%
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 11.1%)	1.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2013
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/02/2018
Start date of inspection	14/10/2024

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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.

## Summary

Gwauncelyn Primary School is a warm and welcoming learning environment. The school puts community at the heart of its curriculum and provides effective support for pupils and their families. Most pupils are respectful, behave well, show enjoyment in their learning and attend school regularly and on time. They know how to keep themselves safe and healthy, and nearly all benefit from the effective support they receive.

Pupils make good progress in developing their listening and speaking skills and talk confidently with their peers when collaborating on tasks. Teachers use high-quality questioning well to engage and challenge pupils. As a result, most pupils make suitable progress in many aspects of their learning. However, when teachers over-direct the learning they limit opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and to apply the skills they acquire effectively in their work across the curriculum. They do not always provide sufficient feedback to pupils to help them improve their work independently. Staff in the youngest classes provide a rich and varied choice of learning experiences appropriate to pupils' individual stage of development. These experiences challenge pupils, ignite their curiosity and encourage them to persevere when learning.

Over time, leaders address many aspects of school improvement. For example, developments in the teaching of oracy across the school, including the Welsh language, have a positive impact on pupils' progress. However, self-evaluation processes do not always focus sharply enough on improving learning experiences for all pupils.

## Recommendations

We have made two recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Improve self-evaluation so that it focuses closely on improving the quality of learning experiences for all pupils
- R2 Improve opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning, make choices about their work and develop as effective independent learners

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

Leaders at Gwauncelyn Primary School establish a strong sense of community, support and care. This ensures that pupils feel safe and happy and enjoy coming to a school where they thrive.

Many pupils begin school with personal, social and communication skills expected for their age. As they move through the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make sound progress. Pupils benefit greatly from the school's highly effective approach to developing speaking skills. As a result, pupils are highly articulate and enjoy talking about their learning.

Leaders and staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. The school's consistent and shared approach to well-being has a positive impact and most pupils attend school regularly and punctually. Their behaviour is exemplary in lessons and during playtime. Pupils are polite and respectful, and show kindness towards their peers, staff and other adults.

Most pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and engage well when working in groups or pairs. When given the opportunity to work independently, many pupils persevere with their tasks. Across the school, teachers plan meaningful learning experiences and often plan sequences of lessons that meet the needs of many pupils. However, on occasion, learning experiences lack sufficient challenge to ensure that all pupils make the progress they could. During lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to consolidate and extend pupils' learning but do not always provide feedback to pupils that enables them to understand their next steps in learning or how to improve their work over time.

Staff draw out ideas and questions from pupils to create an engaging curriculum and share their ideas on the 'I wonder' wall in classrooms. The youngest pupils access a range of learning activities, indoors and outdoors, that generally ignites their curiosity and supports their development well. Across the school, pupils enjoy opportunities to apply their skills and extend their knowledge. In a few lessons, teachers provide meaningful opportunities to apply their skills and develop their independence. For example, in the youngest classes, pupils make choices about their learning. They collaborate well when problem-solving to create a sturdy bridge across a river following the sharing of the story of The Gingerbread Man. However, as pupils move through the school, teachers often over-direct the learning and this limits opportunities for pupils to develop as effective independent learners and to apply their skills at a high enough level.

Teachers work well with colleagues from other schools to consider how to develop a suitable curriculum for their pupils. The school has a clear vision for its curriculum, with a strong focus on developing pupils' skills, supporting their understanding of the locality, Wales and the wider world. Pupils benefit from visits to places in the area such as Pontypridd Market, working with local businesses and exploring global issues. They learn, for example, about the impact of fair trade on farmers in developing countries.

Leaders communicate high expectations and carry out a worthwhile range of activities to evaluate the school's strengths and areas for improvement. All staff contribute to monitoring and leaders value their input. The school has a solid track record of making and sustaining improvements. Recently, for example, the school has successfully improved pupils' Welsh language skills following a thorough review of its provision. The school has developed staff effectively to support pupils with ALN successfully. However, self-evaluation does not always focus closely enough on improving the quality of learning experiences for all pupils. For example, although pupils generally develop sound mathematical knowledge by the end of their time in school, there are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their skills independently and at a challenging enough level in their work across the curriculum.

Leaders and teachers generally place an appropriate focus on developing pupils' literacy skills. Pupils develop sound reading skills that enable them to further explore their curriculum and to read for enjoyment. Younger pupils enjoy opportunities to write, and across the school most pupils develop a good understanding of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Pupils are beginning to develop their writing purposefully in their work across the curriculum, but this work is generally at an early stage of development.

**Spotlight: Developing pupils' oracy in Spanish and Welsh**

Pupils benefit from opportunities to develop their Welsh and Spanish language skills. Teachers are strong language models and use innovative ways to develop pupils' vocabulary, and pupils pick up the language quickly. They develop positive attitudes to learning new languages and make strong progress in developing their skills in both languages.

Most pupils confidently use digital devices for a variety of purposes. For example, the youngest pupils use tablets and apps independently to support their learning and, as they move through the school, pupils use a range of suitable programs to present information and data. They successfully apply their skills in their work across the curriculum and older pupils consider and discuss the benefits and drawbacks of artificial intelligence. Across the school, pupils have a sound awareness of how to keep themselves safe while online.

The school supports pupils to develop their physical skills well. During their time in school, nearly all pupils learn to swim and develop their confidence in the water. Pupils are developing their creative skills through authentic opportunities, such as creating and cooking a menu of dishes for cookery competitions.

Pupils contribute effectively to the life of the school through a variety of leadership roles. For example, the Criw Cymraeg support pupils with their Welsh language skills by encouraging them to use new vocabulary and language patterns. Many pupils feel that they are valued and make a difference to the school community. Governors are highly visible at the school and, overall, they carry out their duties diligently to ensure that the school serves its community effectively.

## **Additional information**

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern

The school's arrangements for site security do not give any cause for concern

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

## 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



## Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

## 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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