

A report on
Brynteg Comprehensive School

Ewenny Road
Bridgend
CF31 3ER

Date of inspection: February 2025

by

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

About Brynteg Comprehensive School

Name of provider	Brynteg Comprehensive School
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	1676
Pupils of statutory school age	1382
Number in sixth form	294
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 Secondary is 21.1%)	18.4%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Secondary is 11.2%)	1.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.9%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	2.9%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	05/12/2016
Start date of inspection	10/02/2025

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.

Summary

Brynteg Comprehensive School provides its pupils with an inclusive, caring environment where the values of 'respect, independence, community, kindness' are an integral part of school life. A range of beneficial support is carefully planned to meet the social and emotional needs of pupils. For example, the 'Dyfodol' provision offers a safe, nurturing place for vulnerable pupils to thrive and make progress.

In many cases, well-planned lessons delivered by teachers passionate about their subject help pupils to make sound progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills. In a few instances, particularly effective teaching enables pupils to make strong progress. In the few lessons where expectations are not high enough, pupils do not make as much progress as they should.

The school is developing an ambitious, innovative Key Stage 3 curriculum. This aims to provide pupils with rich, authentic learning experiences that inspire them to be creative, independent learners. This is a long-term, ongoing project that leaders continue to adapt and develop. Valuable opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their literacy and digital skills across the curriculum support pupils' progress well, although numeracy provision is less well developed.

Despite the challenges arising from the school's notably large site, leaders have, in general, secured a sound culture of safeguarding. However, arrangements regarding pupils leaving the site at lunchtime are not robust enough.

Leadership has secured some important improvements to the work of the school. For example, rates of attendance, including those of pupils eligible for free school meals, improved well last year, although overall attendance remains slightly below that of similar schools. Arrangements for line management, self-evaluation and improvement planning are generally rigorous and robust. However, in a few instances, staff are not held to account with sufficient consistency and leaders do not plan for improvement precisely enough. A range of strategies to reduce the impact of poverty have a positive impact on the well-being and progress of pupils from low-income households.

Recommendations

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

- R1. Address the safeguarding issue identified in the report
- R2. Improve attendance
- R3. Ensure that arrangements for line management and self-evaluation are consistently robust so that all leaders are held to account fully and plan for improvement precisely

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

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

Main findings

Teaching and learning

Mutual respect, clear classroom routines and constructive working relationships between staff and pupils are notable features of most lessons at Brynteg School. As a result, most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning and behave well in lessons and around the school. They arrive promptly to lessons, settle quickly to their work and many listen with respect to their teachers and peers. Many pupils collaborate effectively when given the opportunity to work in pairs or small groups. They sustain their concentration well and show pride in the presentation of their work.

Many pupils, including those with ALN, make at least suitable progress in the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills. They show appropriate recall of their prior learning and apply their understanding well to new contexts. In these lessons, teachers provide clear explanations and instructions, and plan tasks which build incrementally on each other. They question pupils appropriately to check their recall and provide helpful verbal feedback to support them when completing tasks. The impact of written feedback is more variable. In the best cases, pupils use their teachers' advice to improve their work well, but a minority do not act on this feedback.

In a few lessons, pupils make particularly strong progress. In these lessons, teachers:

- inspire pupils with their enthusiasm and passion for their subject
- have notably high expectations of pupils' progress and plan effectively for learning, ensuring that all pupils are challenged suitably
- question pupils skilfully to probe their thinking and help them develop their understanding
- pause the lesson when needed to highlight key learning points or address common misconceptions.

In a few instances, shortcomings in teaching mean pupils do not make as much progress as they could. In these cases, teachers:

- do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve, and allocate too much time to undemanding activities
- overdirect the learning so that pupils do not develop their independence
- do not adapt the pace of learning to match the needs of pupils well enough
- ask simple questions that do not probe and deepen pupils' thinking.

The school provides a suitable range of beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and digital skills in relevant subjects, and a few opportunities to develop their numeracy skills. In general, teachers have a clear understanding of whole-school priorities and key strategies for improving pupils' skills, although these approaches are not always implemented consistently, which sometimes limits their impact. The school is refining its approach to assessment and tracking of skills, which is helping teachers to gain a shared understanding of pupil progress.

Many pupils listen attentively to their classmates and teachers and collaborate well when discussing their work. In a few instances, they take on different roles effectively within groups and adapt what they say in response to the contributions of others. When given the opportunity, a minority of pupils provide extended, articulate verbal responses using relevant subject-specific terminology and a wide vocabulary.

In general, pupils locate information accurately from suitably challenging texts and demonstrate a secure understanding of what they read. However, a few struggle to understand complex texts when they do not receive the support they need to do so. Many pupils develop their vocabulary suitably through a regular focus on this in lessons. They confidently highlight important words and phrases in texts but do not always annotate them adeptly enough to make best use of them in their writing. The majority of pupils use a range of advanced reading skills well, such as when analysing how characters in novels are presented or synthesising information from historical sources.

The majority of pupils produce coherently structured and broadly accurate writing of an appropriate length, including in international languages. However, a minority make regular basic spelling and punctuation errors and teachers do not always provide the feedback they need to correct these. In general, pupils use a suitable range of vocabulary in their writing and make effective use of persuasive techniques. When given the opportunity and freedom to do so, a few pupils write particularly perceptively and skilfully. Many identify strengths and areas for improvement in their own writing and make worthwhile amendments to their work.

Overall, many pupils develop their numeracy skills suitably. A few have a strong understanding of number and use this effectively. However, a few pupils have weak number skills. This is often compounded by an over-reliance on the use of a calculator for simple calculations. Many pupils have a sound understanding of algebra as well as shape and measure. They expand single brackets and use trigonometric ratios successfully. Across the curriculum, many pupils develop their data collection and analysis skills well. When afforded challenging and authentic opportunities, pupils analyse graphs and charts well. A few produce only brief, underdeveloped responses or make careless errors when drawing graphs.

Spotlight 1: Digital Skills

Pupils develop their digital skills well. Key Stage 3 pupils and those in the sixth form use digital devices provided by the school responsibly and independently to enhance their learning. In their computer science lessons, pupils enjoy a range of purposeful opportunities to develop a broad repertoire of useful skills, for example how to interrogate a database successfully. Across the curriculum, there are beneficial opportunities for the progressive development of pupils' digital skills within authentic contexts, such as when pupils create a simple code to control a micro-bit device.

Many pupils have positive attitudes towards their Welsh lessons and participate enthusiastically. In general, they pronounce Welsh words and short phrases suitably, and many older pupils can hold a short conversation in the language. A few pupils make strong progress and converse confidently and independently, often using a variety of tenses or idioms successfully. However, pupils often rely too heavily on scaffolds and structures and lack confidence to speak or write in Welsh independently. The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of Welsh heritage and culture, such as the whole-school Eisteddfod. Pupils benefit from a few opportunities to consider the local area and Wales within the curriculum. However, this is at an early stage of development, as are the opportunities for pupils to hear and speak the language outside their Welsh lessons.

Sixth form pupils are mature, enthusiastic learners. They contribute well to class discussions and work successfully together to support each other's learning.

The school has placed considerable emphasis on developing an innovative, co-constructed curriculum at Key Stage 3 that aims to provide pupils with a range of extended learning experiences to encourage independent learning, creativity and collaboration. 'Expedition days' and 'rich' tasks allow pupils to explore a diverse range of themes alongside a variety of suitably challenging key texts. Staff adapt, review and amend provision appropriately to meet the needs of pupils. However, not all areas of learning have taken the opportunity to fully embrace the ethos of the school's new curriculum, which reduces pupils' engagement in these activities.

The broad range of options at Key Stage 4 and sixth form includes a valuable range of general and vocational courses such as philosophy, criminology, engineering and photography and is supported by helpful partnerships with other providers.

The school provide beneficial support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The personal and social education programme supports the development of their empathy, self-confidence and resilience well. The school uses pupil feedback to ensure that topics meet their needs closely. Pupils' understanding of diversity and inclusion is developed through valuable links with community organisations.

Well-being, care, support and guidance

The school has established a strong sense of community which is valued by staff, pupils, parents and governors. Most pupils are friendly and courteous, exemplifying the school's values of 'respect, independence, community, kindness'. There is a strong ethos of rewarding pupils which supports positive behaviour and reinforces the values of the school.

The curriculum is extended beneficially by enrichment activities that pupils can choose from every fortnight, such as go-kart building, film club and Indian cooking. The school offers an extensive range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, and staff effectively promote equitable access to ensure they are inclusive.

The school has strong, well-established arrangements to help pupils make the transition into Year 7, Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Supported beneficially by partnerships with external agencies, it provides all pupils with helpful advice and guidance to help them make informed decisions about their future.

Leaders, the governing body and staff work well together to promote a sound safeguarding culture within the school. Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training to ensure they have a good understanding of their role in keeping pupils safe. Secure digital systems enable pastoral staff to keep helpful records of the work done to support pupils. Staff respond promptly and thoroughly to address safeguarding concerns when they arise. However, arrangements to verify the attendance of Year 11 pupils on their return to school following lunchtime are not robust enough.

The school applies clear anti-bullying procedures. Staff deal with reported incidents of bullying promptly. They provide tailored programmes of support for individuals helping them to understand and address any inappropriate behaviours. In the 'Hub', staff identify pupils who need support in different aspects of school life. As a result, many pupils feel safe in school, are aware of the safeguarding procedures and know who to turn to if they have a concern.

There are worthwhile processes to promote good attendance. Regular termly newsletters, the use of rewards and pupil-led form competitions emphasise the importance of good attendance clearly to pupils and their families. There is an appropriate graduated response to tackle persistent absence, including a range of interventions to support specific groups of pupils to improve their attendance.

In 2023-2024, rates of attendance, including those of pupils eligible for free school meals, improved well. However, they remain slightly below those of similar schools and are still lower than they were before the COVID-19 pandemic. Rates of persistent absence have reduced but are still higher than those of similar schools. Unverified data from this year indicates that attendance rates continue to improve well, although the attendance of Key Stage 4 pupils remains a concern.

The ALN team build positive relationships with pupils and know them well. They provide a nurturing environment to support them to make progress from their starting points. These pupils have a range of suitable spaces where they feel safe. They have trusted adults or advocates to speak to if they are worried or need support. The school is making good progress in meeting the requirements of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act. One-page profiles and individual development plans take good account of the views of pupils and their parents. They provide useful information and strategies to help staff understand how to best support pupils and help them learn.

The school provides a thoughtfully planned range of support for vulnerable pupils, such as the nurture provision 'Tŷ Seren'.

Spotlight 2: Dyfodol

The 'Dyfodol' provision creates a safe and caring environment for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 who find it challenging to access mainstream education. Pupils receive a personalised curriculum which is carefully matched to their social, emotional and educational needs. This not only helps to build their confidence and self-esteem, but helps them to develop their literacy and numeracy skills so that they can be increasingly integrated into the mainstream curriculum and take part in the life of the school.

Pupils develop their leadership skills purposefully through participation in the school's elected Year Group Councils and the pupil-led Senedd. These groups contribute positively to improving school life, for example by introducing recycling bins and helping to design the rewards system. Pupils also benefit from opportunities to develop their leadership skills by being members of the Pride Group, Eco Committee and charity groups. Sixth form pupils take on roles as senior prefects and run clubs, such as the coding and art clubs.

Leading and improving

The headteacher provides calm, thoughtful and innovative leadership. He has an ambitious vision for Curriculum for Wales which is well understood by most staff. This is focused on ensuring that pupils have authentic opportunities to apply their learning across a range of subject areas. He is ably supported by a committed team of senior leaders who work closely with him to embed this vision.

Leaders have fostered a strong culture of collaboration both between and within subject areas. Leadership roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. There are suitable arrangements in place for performance management that align with the school's improvement priorities. Line management arrangements provide leaders with useful opportunities to support and challenge middle leaders. However, there is some variation in how robustly staff are held to account. As a result, a few areas for improvement are not always addressed consistently or precisely.

Senior leaders consider carefully the well-being of staff. They have introduced a variety of initiatives to help staff carry out their roles. In general, staff feel well supported. Leaders ensure there is an appropriate focus on addressing national priorities. For example, the school has established a thorough and effective approach to tackling the barriers to educational achievement created by poverty. This has impacted positively on pupils' attainment, attendance and well-being.

Leaders at all levels carry out a wide range of suitable self-evaluation activities as part of a well thought out calendar of ongoing quality assurance. For example, they analyse an extensive variety of data and use this to focus closely on the progress of both individual and groups of pupils. Whilst this is helpful in identifying some important areas for development, it is sometimes over-emphasised at the expense of first-hand evaluation of teaching and its impact on pupil progress. When evaluating teaching, leaders do not always focus closely enough on its impact on pupils' learning. This means that leaders do not always set targets that are precise enough.

Whole-school priorities are well understood by staff and form a helpful framework for the improvement planning of subject and pastoral teams. Although middle leaders feel that they have sufficient autonomy in setting their priorities, there is variation in how precisely their planning addresses specific subject-related areas for development.

Staff are provided with a beneficial range of professional learning opportunities. This includes a variety of opportunities to share good practice within and across subject areas and to learn from other schools. In addition, several middle leaders take on temporary senior roles, which helps to develop their leadership skills and enhance the capacity of the senior team. The 'research and development' approach to professional learning has a positive impact on staff engagement in improvement work and provides helpful opportunities for them to explore new approaches and personal interests. However, the impact of professional learning activities is not always evaluated thoroughly enough.

The school communicates well with parents and carers, for example through newsletters. In addition, it provides valuable opportunities to gather their views through surveys and the headteacher's open meetings.

Governors are supportive and have a general awareness of the work of the school. For example, they have a suitable understanding of their role in ensuring that the school promotes healthy eating and drinking. However, governors do not have a precise enough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. In addition, they do not always challenge leaders robustly enough.

The headteacher and governing body monitor the budget carefully and ensure that spending is focused on the priorities in the school development plan. However, the school currently has a deficit budget.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils give cause for concern

The school's arrangements for site management give cause for concern and have been brought to the attention of the local authority

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 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 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 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, where appropriate
- visit a broad sample of lessons, 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 (<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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