

A report on

Penllwyn Primary School

**Fleur-De-Lys Avenue
Pontllanfraith
Blackwood
NP12 2NT**

Date of inspection: June 2025

by

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

About Penllwyn Primary School

Name of provider	Penllwyn Primary School
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	N/A
Number of pupils on roll	144
Pupils of statutory school age	106
Number in nursery classes	23
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%)	54.0%
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%)	15.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/01/2018
Start date of inspection	09/06/2025

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

Penllwyn Primary School creates a warm, nurturing environment where pupils feel safe, respected, and ready to learn. The headteacher and leadership team place pupils' well-being at the heart of the school's vision. They foster a calm, happy community built on mutual respect. Staff know their pupils well and design an authentic, engaging curriculum that reflects pupils' needs and interests. On entry, many pupils have skills below expectations for their age, but rich and purposeful learning experiences in classrooms and the outdoors support their development effectively. During their time at school, most pupils make good overall progress from their individual starting points.

Teachers set high expectations and maintain calm, focused classrooms. They build strong relationships with pupils and help them to develop positive attitudes to learning. Teachers use effective questioning to deepen thinking, and provide feedback that encourages reflection and improvement. Overall, most teaching supports pupils' progress well, although a few lessons limit creativity and independence due to over-direction from adults.

Across the school, pupils grow into confident communicators and attentive listeners. They build strong reading and writing skills by Year 6. Pupils also develop solid mathematical understanding, applying skills confidently to solve real-life problems.

Pupils use a range of digital devices and software effectively to support their learning. Cross-curricular projects and the use of music and art through the curriculum enables pupils' creativity to thrive. There is highly effective provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and support staff play a key role in supporting their progress.

Pupils' personal and social development is strong. They explore identity, emotions, relationships, and social responsibility through planned experiences that foster empathy, ethical thinking, and responsible decision-making. Pupils contribute meaningfully to school life through leadership roles in groups such as the Senedd and Criw Caredig. Although staff sometimes over-direct the activities of these groups, most pupils in leadership positions demonstrate responsibility and maturity.

Strong leadership drives the school's success. The headteacher builds a cohesive team with shared, high expectations. Leaders support professional learning and distribute responsibilities strategically. Staff collaborate effectively with local schools, which strengthens professional development and improves curriculum planning. Robust self-evaluation helps identify strengths and areas for improvement, although leaders do not always focus sharply enough on evaluating the difference that teaching makes to pupils' progress. Effective safeguarding arrangements, strong family partnerships, and active governors all contribute positively to a successful and inclusive school community.

Recommendations

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

- R1. Improve arrangements to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching
- R2. Provide more opportunities for pupils to lead their own learning

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Penllwyn Primary School provides a warm and nurturing environment where pupils feel safe and valued. Leaders provide highly effective care, support and well-being, which underpins the school's vision and helps pupils make good progress. There are high levels of mutual respect between pupils and staff.

Upon entry to the school, most pupils' skills are below those expected for their age. Rich and purposeful learning experiences in classrooms and thoughtful use of the outdoors support their development effectively. During their time at school most pupils make good overall progress from their individual starting points. The school's authentic curriculum reflects the specific needs and interests of the pupils and teachers adapt learning experiences thoughtfully to ensure that it remains relevant, engaging, and purposeful.

Teachers maintain high expectations of all pupils, and this ensures that behaviour across the school is consistently positive. Staff engage pupils well in lessons and help them to stay focused. Most teachers use questioning skilfully to deepen thinking. Ongoing written and verbal feedback supports pupils to reflect and improve their work and older pupils regularly assess their own and others' progress accurately. Overall, pupils develop well as reflective learners.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and most teaching moves pupils' learning forward effectively. Nearly all pupils engage actively in lessons and develop good attitudes to learning. However, in a few lessons, teachers over-direct how pupils structure their work. This limits opportunities for pupils to write at length and present their work creatively.

Most pupils develop into confident speakers and attentive listeners. The youngest pupils listen carefully to adults and co-operate well with peers. By Year 2, most pupils speak clearly and use a wide range of vocabulary and, by the time they are ready to leave the school, they articulate ideas maturely and express themselves with confidence. Most pupils develop strong reading skills. Younger pupils build secure phonic knowledge and understand the relationship between letters and sounds. By the end of Year 6, many pupils read fluently with expression and share thoughtful opinions about a variety of texts. Teachers place a strong emphasis on developing early writing skills and this helps most pupils make good progress. Nursery pupils explore mark-making using a variety of tools and, as they move through the school, most pupils begin to write independently. By Year 6, they write lively texts, structure paragraphs well and adapt vocabulary for purpose and audience successfully.

Most pupils across the school develop secure mathematical knowledge. Younger pupils explore number through practical activity. By Year 3, pupils demonstrate particular confidence with number and place value. Older pupils apply a range of operations to solve problems and explain their reasoning, for example when analysing tidal data or calculating profit in their topic work.

From an early age, nearly all pupils apply digital skills effectively. Younger pupils create images confidently using basic software and, as they progress, they work independently with a range of devices and manage their work very efficiently. Creativity is strong across the school and pupils participate in a wide variety of artistic and musical activities.

The school promotes equality and diversity effectively through the curriculum. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures from around the world and the different characteristics of people and groups in society.

The school's additional learning needs (ALN) provision is a key strength. Staff identify pupils' needs at an early point in their education and provide effective support. They deliver a beneficial range of academic and well-being interventions, often in collaboration with external partners. Leaders keep the effectiveness of these interventions under regular review. Support staff benefit from effective professional learning and make a notable contribution to the school's ALN provision. The school's co-ordinated approach supports nearly all pupils with ALN to make good progress.

Spotlight: Pupils' well-being and personal development

The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' personal growth and sense of citizenship. Staff plan and deliver engaging experiences that deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. The youngest pupils explore their identity through creative activities, while older pupils focus on emotional awareness, respectful relationships, online safety and social responsibility. These experiences foster empathy and ethical understanding. Through collaborative activities and reflective discussions, pupils consider the consequences of their actions, which positively influences their attitudes to learning. Pupils speak with confidence, respect different perspectives, and make informed, responsible choices.

Pupils play an active role in school life. Leadership groups such as the Senedd, Criw Cymraeg and Criw Caredig help pupils to develop responsibility and confidence. Peer mediators handle any conflicts maturely, and older pupils take part in important activities such as staff interviews. However, at times, over-direction by staff limits the autonomy and impact of a few pupil groups.

The headteacher leads with clarity and purpose, building a strong team focused on ensuring effective well-being and high-quality learning experiences for all pupils. This shared approach helps staff maintain high expectations and work towards a common vision. Leaders distribute responsibilities strategically and build leadership capacity effectively at all levels. Well-focused professional learning features strongly across the school and all staff engage enthusiastically and collaboratively to improve their practice.

Spotlight 2: Partnership working

The school works closely with local cluster schools to strengthen transition, share best practice, and support curriculum development. Teachers collaborate regularly to align planning and provide joint professional learning opportunities. This strong partnership enhances consistency, for example by developing a co-ordinated approach to teaching Welsh, which supports most pupils to make good progress in learning the language during their time at the school.

Leaders use a robust monitoring system to evaluate school performance. They draw on a broad range of evidence to identify what they do well and what they need to improve. However, at times, evaluation activities do not focus sharply enough on identifying the impact that teaching has on pupils' learning and progress.

Leaders prioritise safeguarding, and staff, visitors and pupils all promote a strong safeguarding culture. Strong family partnerships underpin the school's success and leaders communicate openly with parents, seek feedback regularly, and respond thoughtfully. Consequently, parents trust staff and feel confident in the school's care for their children.

Governors support the school well and challenge leaders appropriately. Their active roles across curriculum areas help them understand priorities and influence improvements, such as raising attendance through targeted initiatives. They also support the headteacher to manage funding carefully and use grants to reduce disadvantage and ensure equal access to learning opportunities including curriculum visits and residential experiences.

The school promotes good attendance successfully through regular communication, class rewards, and celebration assemblies. Staff track attendance carefully and work effectively with families. Over time, this work has resulted in improved rates of attendance.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any 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/carers 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)

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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales