

Pen Afan Primary School
Western Terrace
Blaengwynfi
Port Talbot
SA13 3YE

09/12/2025

Dear leaders and staff

Interim visit: December 2025

A team of inspectors visited Pen Afan Primary School, part of the Upper Afan Valley federation of schools, to consider progress in relation to two recommendations from the previous core inspection. The inspection team took the opportunity to observe teaching and learning, talk with pupils and staff, consider documentation, and look at samples of pupils' work. Below is a summary of the findings from the visit.

Focus of visit

Improve provision to develop pupils' literacy skills

- Since the core inspection, leaders have placed a suitable focus on developing pupils' literacy skills. They have provided teachers and support staff with a beneficial range of professional learning that structures the way in which they support pupils to develop their reading and writing skills. This helps to ensure that many older pupils develop their literacy skills competently. However, many younger pupils have too few opportunities to develop and apply their literacy skills independently and creatively in a developmentally appropriate learning environment.
- Many pupils develop their speaking and listening skills suitably as they move through the school. When given the opportunity and encouraged to do so, they explain their thoughts and ideas competently and in suitable detail.
- Across the school, many pupils develop their writing skills appropriately. They have suitable opportunities to redraft and improve their writing following feedback from teachers. This helps to improve the quality of their work. Older pupils have beneficial opportunities to write in different styles and now use a broader

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vocabulary more accurately, for instance when writing imaginative poetry. A majority of pupils spell common words suitably. In general, pupils do not always write or present their work neatly.

- The youngest pupils are developing a useful understanding of the link between letters and their associated sounds. A majority are beginning to use this knowledge to read short texts and decode new words appropriately.
- Many older pupils read a range of texts appropriately and read aloud with suitable fluency. They use a few strategies to make meaning from texts, including their knowledge of phonics. They read texts independently for sustained periods and recognise how authors use devices, such as alliteration and kennings to help bring life to texts. Many enjoy reading and talk about books they read for pleasure.

Strengthen the contributions of leaders at all levels, across the federation, particularly to evaluation and improvement work

- Since the core inspection, leaders have strengthened their monitoring activities to ensure they draw on first-hand evidence when evaluating the effectiveness of the school's work. These include book looks, learning walks, and regular class visits. As a result, leaders are now able to identify specific areas for development more precisely.
- Across the federation, leadership roles and processes are now more clearly defined. Assistant headteachers now have sufficient time to manage the day-to-day demands of their school sites. This enables them to take greater responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and to work more closely with colleagues across the federation. As a result, there is a growing ethos of support and reflective practice
- Leaders work productively together and are increasingly creating opportunities for staff collaboration. Joint planning sessions and the sharing of pupils' work to discuss progress are beginning to raise expectations and improve consistency in aspects of teaching across the federation.
- Leaders provide valuable professional learning opportunities within each school and model teaching strategies to support staff development. For example, they provide coaching sessions that help teachers and support staff strengthen their understanding of the school's approach to teaching literacy. This is beginning to improve consistency, for example in the provision for developing early reading skills.
- However, aspects of teaching across the school still require further attention. These include the need to significantly strengthen the provision for Foundation Learning so that pupils can access developmentally appropriate and purposeful learning activities, as well as the need to provide more effective and engaging opportunities for older pupils to redraft and improve their writing.

- Leaders are beginning to define more clearly what effective teaching looks like across the federation. However, this is still at an early stage. They recognise the need to further strengthen opportunities for teachers to work across schools to share effective practice, refine their teaching and build confidence in meeting pupils' needs.
- Currently, teachers tend to rely too heavily on structured schemes, limiting opportunities for more flexible and creative approaches that would better engage pupils and help them make more progress with their learning.

The school's/PRU's latest core inspection report and further information on the process and purpose of interim visits can be found on our website:

<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/provider/6712234>

Yours sincerely



Liz Miles

Assistant Director