

**A report on**

**Darran Park Primary School**

**Brook Street  
Ferndale  
RCT  
CF43 4LE**

**Date of inspection: March 2026**

**by**

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

## About Darran Park Primary School

Name of provider	Darran Park Primary School
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	320
Pupils of statutory school age	243
Number in nursery classes	34
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 21.7%)	20.8%
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 9.2%)	*
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	2.5%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/05/2011

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	02/03/2026

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](http://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

Leaders and staff create a welcoming and inclusive environment where pupils and their families feel valued. The school has a strong community ethos and promotes positive relationships, and a shared commitment to pupils' well-being and success. Pupils behave well, treat one another with kindness and make a positive contribution to school life.

Teachers plan engaging lessons. In most lessons, activities are well structured and matched suitably to pupils' needs. This helps pupils to remain motivated and make strong progress. Classrooms are calm and purposeful, and teachers maintain high expectations for pupils' behaviour and the quality of their work.

Nearly all pupils develop strong literacy skills and apply these effectively across the curriculum. Younger pupils talk confidently about their learning, while older pupils contribute thoughtfully to discussions. By Year 6, pupils read accurately and with expression, and most write skilfully. The school promotes a positive reading culture, and teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures, beliefs and experiences.

Pupils develop secure mathematical and digital skills and apply these confidently across a range of contexts. Most make steady progress in Welsh, particularly in speaking and responding to instructions. However, many pupils do not yet extend their spoken Welsh responses confidently or use a wider range of tenses independently.

The school supports pupils' well-being and additional learning needs effectively. Staff provide tailored support and work closely with parents and external agencies to ensure pupils receive appropriate help. In the Learning Support Class (LSC), pupils benefit from a nurturing environment with clear routines and resources that support communication and independence. The school's highly effective partnerships with families and the wider community provides valuable support for parents and pupils.

The school's outdoor learning provision is a notable strength. Purposeful outdoor experiences help pupils develop resilience, independence and problem-solving skills. Leaders provide clear direction and work collaboratively with staff to drive improvement. Together, they have created a creative curriculum and a supportive environment where pupils can thrive and develop important skills for the future.

## **Recommendations**

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

- R1 Further improve opportunities for pupils to use and develop their Welsh language skills.

## **What happens next**

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

## Main evaluation

Leaders have created a welcoming, community-focused school where pupils and families learn and achieve together. Leaders promote a strong ethos of inclusion, high expectations and positive relationships that supports pupils' wellbeing and learning effectively. Nearly all pupils behave well and show respect and kindness towards one another.

Nearly all teachers plan purposeful and engaging lessons and most communicate clear learning intentions that help pupils to understand what they are learning and the purpose of their work. They establish positive classroom environments and have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and the quality of their work. In most lessons, learning activities are suitably matched to pupils' needs, and teachers maintain an appropriate pace of learning that sustains pupils' engagement and supports them to make strong progress. Nearly all teachers use a range of effective questioning strategies to check pupils' understanding, address misconceptions and extend pupils' thinking.

In the Learning Support Class (LSC), staff provide a nurturing environment with clear routines and well-planned learning experiences that meet pupils' individual needs effectively. Nearly all pupils engage confidently with the range of resources and communication tools available and they develop increasing independence.

### SPOTLIGHT

The school makes highly effective use of the outdoor environment to enrich learning and support pupils' well-being. Purposeful outdoor experiences help pupils to develop resilience, independence and problem-solving skills. Nearly all pupils gain confidence through these authentic learning opportunities.

Most younger pupils engage confidently in discussions about their learning. Younger pupils retell familiar stories clearly, while older pupils contribute thoughtfully to class discussions and express their ideas with increasing clarity and maturity. This strong foundation in oracy supports pupils to develop secure reading and writing skills.

By Year 6, nearly all pupils read accurately and discuss how authors use language for effect confidently. Teachers promote a positive reading culture and provide pupils with access to a broad range of texts. Teachers plan systematically to develop pupils' understanding of different types of writing. As a result, most pupils produce purposeful pieces, edit their work carefully and apply their writing skills effectively across the curriculum.

Most pupils develop their Welsh language skills steadily as they move through the school. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise simple Welsh language

patterns through activities such as Helpwr Heddiw, which helps younger pupils follow instructions and use basic sentence structures confidently. As a result, older pupils respond to questions about themselves and their experiences with increasing accuracy. However, because opportunities for pupils to extend their responses and practise speaking using a wider range of tenses are limited, many do not yet develop the confidence to do this consistently.

Effective school improvement activities, professional learning and collaboration with regional partners and local schools have strengthened the teaching of a broad range of skills. For example, following targeted professional learning on mathematical reasoning. Teachers plan effectively to develop pupils' mathematical skills. This has impacted positively on pupils' understanding of number and their ability to solve problems. Many pupils apply their mathematical and reasoning skills successfully through meaningful real-life contexts.

Nearly all pupils develop strong digital skills and use them confidently to support their learning across the curriculum. As they progress through the school, pupils create effective animations, databases and presentations. Older pupils refine and improve digital presentations independently, for example by adding audio to explain the risks associated with artificial intelligence.

## **SPOTLIGHT**

Partnership work with families and the wider community is a notable strength. Staff provide valuable opportunities for parents and pupils to learn together, which raises family aspirations and helps parents to support learning at home. Workshops and community events strengthen engagement with families and raise awareness of local support services. This work has had a positive impact on pupils' attendance and developing positive attitudes to learning.

The school has a strong and balanced approach to assessment. Teachers use a range of effective strategies alongside planned assessments, to monitor pupils' progress and to inform lesson planning. The whole school approach to marking and feedback has a positive impact on improving the quality of pupils' work. Regular pupil progress meetings help staff to identify pupils who require additional support.

The school supports pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) effectively. Staff work closely with parents and external agencies to provide tailored support. Skilled staff deliver targeted interventions that support pupils' well-being and reading successfully. This supports nearly all pupils with ALN, including those in the LSC, to make good progress from their starting points.

Leaders and staff have designed a creative and engaging curriculum that reflects the local area and Welsh context effectively and meets the needs of pupils well. Teachers encourage pupils to contribute to their learning appropriately through regular use of questions. The curriculum enables pupils to develop useful life skills through activities such as cooking and enterprise projects.

Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their scientific and historical knowledge, such as when investigating the effect of exercise on heart rate or learning about the history of Ferndale. The curriculum supports pupils' personal, social, cultural and spiritual development well through visits to places of worship and when learning about influential people from diverse backgrounds. A wide range of extra-curricular activities further enriches pupils' experiences.

Pupil voice plays an important role in school life. Through a range of committees, pupils take on meaningful responsibilities and contribute purposefully to school improvement. They promote initiatives such as healthy eating, the Welsh language, sustainability and online safety appropriately. This helps pupils in leadership roles to feel valued.

Governors support the work of the school effectively and bring a broad range of relevant skills and experience to their role. Through regular involvement in school improvement activities, they develop a sound understanding of the school's work and priorities for improvement. This enables them to work constructively with leaders and staff to evaluate the impact of the school's provision. Governors monitor the school's use of resources carefully and have a clear understanding of the factors that influence the budget. They ensure that funding, including grant funding, is used appropriately and targeted effectively to support pupils from low-income families.

Leaders provide clear direction for the school and foster a positive, collaborative culture among staff. They work closely with staff and the school community to drive improvement and maintain a strong focus on improving pupil outcomes and well-being.

### **Additional information**

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

The school's arrangements for site management 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.

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