

**A report on**

**Ystruth Primary**

**East Pentwyn**

**Blaina**

**Abertillery**

**Gwent**

**NP13 3XG**

**Date of inspection: March 2026**

**by**

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education**

**and Training in Wales**

## About Ystruth Primary

Name of provider	Ystruth Primary
Local authority	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	Category 1 English-medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	330
Pupils of statutory school age	261
Number in nursery classes	32
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%)	18.8%
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%)	8.0%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	1.9%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	09/04/2024

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/05/2017
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

The headteacher, alongside staff, help pupils to be happy, confident and ready to learn in an inclusive and respectful learning community. This contributes effectively to pupils' respectful and positive attitudes to learning. As a result, pupils learn and play together well and feel a strong sense of belonging to the school, the local area and Wales.

Many pupils, including those from low-income households and those with additional learning needs, including those in the Learning Resource Bases, make sound progress from different starting points. Teachers encourage and support pupils to learn in a calm and nurturing learning environments. Staff model the Welsh language well with pupils and provide valuable opportunities for them to learn about Welsh culture and heritage. In general, teachers do not support pupils to nurture and develop their thinking and independent learning skills well enough.

Governors provide strong strategic oversight. They support and challenge leaders and staff thoughtfully. Leaders and staff monitor and evaluate the teaching and learning effectively and identify strengths and areas for development well. They prioritise what needs to be strengthened successfully and support staff to continue to develop their practice through useful professional learning. However, a few areas for improvement remain underdeveloped, including ensuring greater consistency in high-quality and cohesive provision to support pupils to extend their knowledge and develop their skills progressively over time.

Leaders prioritise the importance of pupils attending school regularly and work with families and partners consistently. However, a few pupils do not attend regularly enough.

Staff have beneficial working relationships with parents which help pupils to enjoy and share their learning experiences. This also ensures that the school is an important and integral part of the local community.

## Recommendations

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

- R1 Improve attendance, especially for pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those with additional learning needs
- R2 Further develop high quality teaching and assessment across the school to support all pupils to make strong progress
- R3 Refine curriculum planning to ensure that pupils' knowledge and skills are developed progressively

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

The headteacher is a passionate leader who strives for all pupils to be happy, confident and ready to learn in an inclusive and respectful learning community. Leaders, teachers and teaching assistants work highly effectively as a team and strive to realise an ambitious vision that supports pupils to have high aspirations of themselves and others. The collaborative culture has a positive impact on most pupils' attitudes to learning and instils a strong sense of belonging to the school, the local area and Wales.

The school's provision for pupils from low-income households and those with additional learning needs (ALN), including pupils in the learning resource bases (LRB) is effective. Leaders identify pupils' needs from different starting points at an early stage. They seek the necessary support to ensure that many pupils to make sound progress towards their individual targets.

All pupils have a strong voice within the school and are encouraged to contribute their ideas, suggest improvements and work diligently to create actions for change. For example, the Senedd group introduced a behaviour reward system which is having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour across the school. As a result, most pupils learn and play together successfully in a nurturing and calming learning environment. However, the attendance of a few pupils is too low over time, which, in turn, hinders their progress in learning. Although leaders have identified attendance as a priority for improvement, the actions to support pupils with ALN and those from low-income households who are absent from school regularly are not effective enough.

Staff have strong working relationships with pupils and support their well-being effectively. They know the pupils well and provide valuable support to meet their emotional and learning needs. In the best practice, teachers support pupils to engage in learning successfully and encourage them to actively participate to use their skills in stimulating learning contexts. However, in general, teachers do not promote pupils' independence, thinking and ownership of what they are doing sufficiently, including in the outside learning provision. This limits the progress of a few pupils, especially those identified as being more able.

Across the school, many pupils, including those in the LRBs, make sound progress in developing their oracy skills in line with their stage of development. They collaborate effectively, enhancing their learning in their work across the curriculum successfully. Following beneficial professional learning, staff provide effective opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills in a literacy-rich environment. Many older pupils develop strong reading skills and support each other independently to further enhance their skills using a variety of texts. Over time, many pupils develop their writing skills well and apply

the features of different types of writing effectively using clear learning intentions and success guides. A few pupils do not develop a consistent handwriting style and do not use grammar and punctuation appropriately. In general, the feedback given to pupils by teachers has not been successful enough in addressing this issue.

Nearly all staff throughout the school model the Welsh language well with great enthusiasm. Many pupils clearly enjoy learning the language, such as when singing popular Welsh songs in assemblies, and enhance their vocabulary and sentence patterns in line with their stage of language development. Many older pupils extend these patterns confidently and hold simple conversations in meaningful contexts. Pupils receive valuable opportunities to learn about Welsh culture and heritage.

Staff provide worthwhile opportunities to support pupils' social, moral and spiritual development. This, in turn, fosters pupils' appreciation of shared values, such as honesty, fairness, justice and sustainability well. Pupils who attend the LRBs are integral members of the school community and actively participate in regular activities with their peers in mainstream classes in a wide range of learning contexts. This helps all pupils to support each other in their learning, such as in creative and physical activities. Through these valuable experiences, pupils develop an understanding of the needs and rights of others well.

Leaders, alongside staff, conduct beneficial self-evaluation activities to monitor and review the provision. They are beginning to focus on measuring the impact of the provision on pupil progress and standards. However, a few areas for sustained improvement remain underdeveloped, including ensuring greater consistency in high-quality and cohesive provision to support pupils to develop their skills progressively over time. As a result, pupils do not always make systematic progress in extending their knowledge and developing their skills, for example in mathematics. In general, many teachers provide pupils with valuable opportunities to use and apply their numeracy and digital skills beneficially across areas of learning.

Governors provide strong strategic oversight, with purposeful support and challenge to leaders and staff. They have a good understanding of the needs of pupils and their families and are valued members of the school community. By using a wide range of their professional skills, governors contribute to driving school improvement in a considerate and sustained manner.

Leaders support staff to develop professionally, such as by providing effective opportunities for them to develop their skills as middle-leaders. They provide the structure, time and collaborative environment for staff to trial different approaches to teaching and learning that are closely aligned to the school's areas for development. The

school's reflective approach to evaluating the impact of professional learning on pupils' outcomes is developing successfully.

Leaders and staff have a productive working relationship with parents. They work alongside parents constructively to support their children's well-being and learning, for example when inviting parents to school to showcase the learning experiences through the 'Parent and Children Together' approach. This further embeds the partnership between staff and parents the school's role as an integral part of the local community.

### **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. They have an appropriate recovery plan to improve the current financial situation.

## 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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Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

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