

Penarlag C.P. School
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23/03/2026

Dear leaders and staff

Interim visit: March 2026

A team of inspectors visited Penarlag County Primary School recently 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

Strengthen distributed leadership to develop a coherent and progressive approach to curriculum and assessment

- The headteacher has worked thoughtfully to strengthen distributed leadership and empower leaders to build an engaging curriculum. She supports leaders to work with other schools and external agencies to gather and share beneficial ideas and experiences. As a result, the school is building a curriculum that supports learning systematically over time.
- Curriculum leaders monitor and evaluate their areas of responsibility suitably and recognise areas for development helpfully. They work well to help teachers structure learning that builds on pupils' skills successfully as they move through the school. Leaders recognise that, in a very few areas of learning, these plans are not complete and need refining.
- Curriculum leaders focus helpfully on ensuring teachers develop effective pedagogy including different approaches to teaching. This has a positive impact, particularly on pupils' thinking skills.

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- Overall, the curriculum for the youngest pupils enhances skills, such as their early literacy skills, well. There is a clear commitment to providing pupils with choice and opportunities to learn through play. This approach is at an early stage of development and learning often focuses on completing activities. This reduces opportunities for pupils to make progress in improving their independent learning skills and creativity.
- In many lessons, teachers and assistants use classroom-based assessment to help support pupils' learning appropriately. Teachers regularly share success criteria with pupils and give them helpful feedback, so they know how to improve their learning.
- In the younger classes, teachers are beginning to evaluate pupils' learning in a few areas of the curriculum successfully. Leaders recognise the need to develop assessment processes to help them evaluate and monitor the progress that pupils make across the school.

Ensure that professional learning is strategically planned to meet the needs of the school's immediate improvement priorities

- Senior leaders have improved professional learning opportunities linked to the school's priority areas for improvement. They have developed a team approach that engages staff well and supports and encourages them.
- Curriculum leaders have accessed a range of professional learning to strengthen subject knowledge. In a few cases, this has involved working in collaboration with external agencies such as a higher education institution. This work is having a positive impact and promotes the use of practical activities in the teaching of science.
- Leaders have supported a majority of teaching staff to take part in national professional learning initiatives. This has improved the teaching of numeracy and, in particular, how to deepen pupils' mathematical understanding. Consequently, many pupils identify multiple strategies to solve number problems with increasing confidence.
- A few higher-level teaching assistants have strengthened their skills to support priority areas well. They lead staff training and contribute to the development of whole school procedures successfully. However, in general, opportunities for support staff to attend professional learning that focuses on teaching and learning are less well-developed.
- Professional development reviews for staff link appropriately to whole school priorities. Staff appreciate the opportunity to reflect on their practice and identify areas for further improvement. Leaders encourage career progression and many staff have embarked on leadership training or further qualifications. Development opportunities, such as secondment, are regularly promoted by leaders.

- Senior leaders keep a record of professional learning activity which provides an effective overview of staff development opportunities over time. They have begun to establish a strategic whole school plan for professional learning which focusses on meeting the needs of the schools' priorities.

The school'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/6642093>

Yours sincerely



Liz Miles

Assistant Director