

A report on

Abercarn Primary School

**Chapel Of Ease
Abercarn
NP11 5LH**

Date of inspection: March 2026

by

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

About Abercarn Primary School

Name of provider	Abercarn 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	
Number of pupils on roll	255
Pupils of statutory school age	193
Number in nursery classes	31
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%)	14.4%
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%)	8.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2011

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	27/11/2017
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

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Summary

Abercarn Primary School is a welcoming and inclusive school where positive relationships support pupils' well-being and engagement in learning. Staff maintain high expectations for behaviour and learning. Pupils feel safe, behave well and show positive attitudes to their work. The school works closely with parents and the wider community, and helps pupils develop pride in their local area and a strong sense of belonging.

The headteacher provides clear strategic leadership that focuses strongly on improving pupils' learning and well-being. Leaders use well-established self-evaluation processes to identify strengths and areas for development and plan actions for improvement. Governors support and challenge leaders effectively and have a sound understanding of the school's work.

The school provides a broad curriculum that enables pupils to develop their skills progressively as they move through the school. Teachers plan varied learning experiences that develop pupils' understanding of their local area and the wider world. Pupils contribute to decisions about their learning and gain confidence in sharing their ideas. However, in lessons adults sometimes over-direct pupils and intervene too quickly. This limits opportunities for pupils to reflect on tasks, draw on prior learning and decide how best to approach their work.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is effective. Staff identify pupils' needs early and work closely with external agencies to provide appropriate support. Most pupils with ALN make good progress towards their individual targets.

Most pupils develop secure literacy, numeracy and digital skills as they move through the school, and they apply their numeracy skills confidently when solving problems. There are limited opportunities for pupils to practise spoken Welsh. Consequently, pupils do not use Welsh confidently or regularly enough.

Across the school, teachers support pupils to become confident communicators. A distinctive feature of the school's work is its pupil-led radio station, where pupils plan, script and present broadcasts for a real audience. These experiences strengthen pupils' digital competence and help them communicate their ideas with increasing clarity and confidence.

Recommendations

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

R1 Ensure that teachers do not over-direct learning or intervene too quickly during learning activities

R2 Improve pupils' Welsh oracy skills

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Strong links with the local community are an important feature of life at Abercarn Primary School. Leaders encourage pupils to take pride in their local area and help them to develop a clear sense of belonging. They listen carefully to the views of parents and community members and work closely with local partners. This builds trust and promotes respect for others. Harmonious and productive use of shared facilities on the school site strengthens these partnerships and provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their physical and social skills.

Staff across the school build positive relationships with pupils and maintain consistently high expectations for their behaviour and engagement. Pupils feel safe and behave well throughout the school day. Most pupils engage well in their learning and show positive attitudes towards their work.

The school provides effective support for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). Clear systems help staff to identify pupils' needs early and involve external agencies appropriately. Staff use a well-considered range of strategies to support ALN pupils' learning and emotional well-being. Strong transition arrangements, including close work with families and early years providers, ensure that staff understand these pupils' needs well from the outset. This supports most pupils with ALN to make good progress towards their individual targets.

The school provides an adaptive curriculum that supports the progressive development of pupils' skills through a varied range of learning experiences. These opportunities help pupils to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding well. They learn about different beliefs and traditions, which help them to respect others and appreciate diversity within their community and beyond. Pupils often influence what and how they learn, including through 'Pupil Voice Weeks', helping them to develop a stronger sense of responsibility for their learning. Overall, these learning experiences support most pupils, including those from low-income households and those with ALN, to make secure progress over time.

Across the school, teachers create well-organised learning environments that help pupils to engage purposefully in their learning. Most teachers provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to work in pairs, groups and with pupils from different year groups. This helps most pupils to collaborate effectively and share their ideas with others confidently. Generally, teachers provide useful feedback and opportunities for pupils to assess their own work as well as that of their peers. This helps many pupils recognise their strengths and identify how they can improve their work.

Many teachers provide clear explanations and ask useful questions to strengthen pupils' understanding and address misconceptions. However, staff too often over-direct pupils and intervene too quickly. This reduces opportunities for pupils to reflect on tasks, draw on prior learning and decide how best to approach their work.

Across the school, teachers develop pupils' oracy and communication skills successfully. They provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas and present their learning. As pupils move through the school, these opportunities help them organise their thinking and express their ideas clearly when speaking with others.

Spotlight: Pupil-led radio station

Pupils plan, script and record broadcasts for a real audience using high-quality digital equipment as part of the school's pupil-led radio station. This successful feature of the school's work provides authentic opportunities for pupils to develop their digital competence and communication skills. When presenting or interviewing others, pupils organise their ideas clearly, adapt their language and tone to suit the audience and respond spontaneously to questions. These experiences help pupils to communicate with increasing clarity and confidence.

Throughout the school, teachers plan a good range of opportunities that enable pupils to become confident in their use of a wide range of digital devices and programmes. This helps pupils develop their digital skills progressively and apply them effectively in different contexts.

The school has an effective and consistent approach to the early teaching of letters and sounds. This enables most younger pupils to recognise sounds and decode words accurately when learning to read. They develop and build upon these skills well as they get older, and as such most pupils become fluent readers.

Over time, most pupils develop their writing skills appropriately. Younger pupils communicate simple ideas clearly in writing, while older pupils organise their ideas logically and select suitable vocabulary. They adapt their writing for different purposes and audiences. Across the curriculum, opportunities for pupils to write at length beyond literacy lessons are still developing.

Most pupils develop a secure mathematical understanding as they progress through the school. Younger pupils use their knowledge of number to tackle simple problems confidently. Older pupils apply their mathematical skills to solve authentic problems in mathematics lessons and across the curriculum. This supports the development of effective problem-solving and thinking skills.

Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to learn simple Welsh words and phrases. However, opportunities to practise and extend Welsh oracy skills are not consistent enough across the school to support strong progress.

The headteacher, supported by senior leaders and staff, provides strategic leadership focused on pupils' learning and well-being. A commitment to equity and inclusion underpins the school's work. Leaders and governors monitor the progress of different groups of pupils, including those with ALN and those affected by poverty. The school uses the pupil development grant (PDG) effectively to provide targeted support that reduces barriers to learning for eligible pupils.

Leaders allocate roles and responsibilities carefully so that staff expertise strengthens provision and meets pupils' needs effectively. The school has established a creative and productive approach to the leadership of ALN. Identified staff take on clear, shared roles and responsibilities, helping to build capacity and ensure timely support for identified pupils. Leaders also provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility through a range of pupil leadership groups. Pupils value these roles and feel that their views are listened to and respected.

Leaders use well-established self-evaluation processes involving staff, governors and pupils to gain a comprehensive understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. A systematic cycle of monitoring and review helps them track progress and adapt practice where needed. Improvement priorities align with national priorities, including Curriculum for Wales, ALN reform and the development of pupils' Welsh language skills. Governors engage purposefully through first-hand activities and use their skills and expertise to provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge.

The school places a strong emphasis on professional learning. Staff engage with external networks, research and training opportunities that develop their practice beneficially. Recent work on foundation learning has strengthened staff understanding of effective early years practice and has led to improved provision that engages younger pupils more confidently in talk.

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)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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