

A report on

**Marlborough Primary School
Blenheim Road
Pen Y Lan
Cardiff
CF23 5EF**

Date of inspection: June 2026

by

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

About Marlborough Primary School

Name of provider	Marlborough Primary School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	492
Pupils of statutory school age	375
Number in nursery classes	62
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%)	9.5%
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%)	10.4%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	13.1%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2011

A report on Marlborough Primary School
June 2026

Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	12/11/2018
Start date of inspection	29/06/2026

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

Overall, leaders provide a clear strategic direction and have created an inclusive, supportive community where most pupils are happy, behave well and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Leaders and staff share a strong commitment to helping pupils succeed. Consequently, many pupils make good progress from their starting points, including pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), those attending the specialist resource bases (SRBs) and those eligible for free school meals.

The school's curriculum is broad and engaging. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, helping them to develop as ethically informed citizens. Pupils benefit from opportunities to develop entrepreneurial, independent and life skills. There are strong opportunities for pupils to use and improve their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Provision for developing pupils' digital skills is a particular strength. Opportunities for purposeful exploration and play, indoors and outdoors are less well developed.

Teachers provide pupils with many engaging learning experiences. They question pupils thoughtfully and purposefully and provide helpful verbal feedback that supports their progress. Many pupils make effective progress in developing their reading and writing skills and their mathematical knowledge and understanding. Most pupils demonstrate resilience, collaborate well and develop effective thinking skills. However, teachers do not always adapt learning sufficiently well to provide appropriate challenge or support for all pupils, including those in the SRBs. Few pupils develop their Welsh language skills strongly.

The headteacher has high expectations of staff and pupils. She develops leadership at all levels thoughtfully. Through a model of distributed leadership, the school brings about improvements in provision effectively, for instance in pupils' digital learning. However, monitoring activities are not always focused sharply enough on teaching and learning. Governors support the school effectively. Leaders do not ensure that the school's culture of safeguarding is consistently strong.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Address the issues relating to safeguarding identified during the inspection
- R2 Address inconsistencies in teaching to ensure that pupils are challenged and supported consistently
- R3 Ensure that pupils have stronger opportunities to influence their learning and to learn through exploration and play, both indoors and outdoors

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Overall, leaders at Marlborough Primary provide a clear strategic direction for the school and have established an inclusive community where most pupils feel happy, behave well and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. There is a shared commitment amongst staff to helping pupils to succeed and many pupils make good progress from their individual starting points, including those in the specialist resource bases (SRBs), those with additional learning needs (ALN) and pupils' eligible for free school meals.

The school's inquiry-led curriculum provides pupils with a broad range of progressive learning experiences. Engaging topics inspire pupils to consider real-world issues, raise their aspirations and help them develop a strong understanding of their role as ethically informed citizens. There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of the history and heritage of their locality, Wales and the wider world successfully. Opportunities for pupils to explore ethnically diverse communities in Wales and to develop their awareness of the diversity of families and relationships are less well developed.

The school uses its curriculum well to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inquiries such as 'how important are our beliefs?' help pupils become thoughtful, respectful and responsible individuals. Although leaders encourage and support pupils to influence the life of the school purposefully through a range of pupil

leadership groups opportunities for pupils to influence what they learn are underdeveloped.

Most pupils make effective progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. Younger pupils speak confidently about their learning using a well-developed vocabulary, while older pupils organise and explain their ideas clearly and confidently during discussions with adults and their peers. The school has established a clear and consistent whole-school approach to teaching reading. Most pupils engage purposefully with high-quality texts and develop their reading skills progressively. Most older pupils read fluently, respond thoughtfully to questions, make relevant inferences and explore deeper meanings within the texts they study. Many pupils make effective progress in developing their writing skills, with a few making very good progress. Across the school, many pupils write creatively using a well-developed vocabulary. They present their work carefully and with pride

Teachers provide younger pupils with suitable opportunities to hear and use the Welsh language. As they move through the school, many teachers encourage pupils to use a few simple Welsh phrases regularly, and by Year 6, a majority of pupils are beginning to share simple information about themselves. However, few speak confidently or use these Welsh language patterns fluently.

Many pupils make strong progress in developing their mathematical knowledge and understanding. By Year 6, they demonstrate a secure understanding of a wide range of mathematical concepts, solve problems confidently and apply their numeracy skills successfully across a broad range of contexts across the curriculum. Provision for developing pupils' digital skills is particularly strong and most pupils develop these skills effectively, for instance making animations, sound recordings and other digital media to present their ideas creatively.

The school promotes pupils' entrepreneurial skills successfully through projects, such as planning the school barbeque. There is a growing emphasis on developing independence and life skills through experiences in the local community. Within the specialist resource bases (SRBs), teachers plan the curriculum carefully around pupils' individual needs, while linking experiences to whole-school themes. Teachers provide an effective balance between adult-led and child-led learning for the youngest pupils but in many classes, there are too few opportunities for pupils to learn through purposeful exploration and play, particularly in the outdoors.

Most teachers, including those in the SRBs, ensure that learning experiences engage pupils well. Many use effective questioning to extend pupils' thinking and to encourage them to explain their ideas. Consequently, most pupils engage positively in learning, persevere with their work and show resilience when faced with challenges. Many approach problem-

solving with confidence, collaborate effectively and apply their thinking skills successfully in practical situations. They collaborate well with their peers.

Most teachers provide pupils with helpful verbal feedback that helps them identify and address misconceptions effectively. Teachers routinely share success criteria so that pupils understand what they are aiming to achieve. They provide suitable opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work and that of their peers. This helps pupils to recognise where they can make improvements to their learning.

In a majority of lessons, teachers ensure that learning experiences are matched thoughtfully to pupils needs. However, teachers do not always adapt activities carefully enough to ensure that all pupils are supported or challenged effectively, including in the SRBs. This hampers the progress that pupils make in these sessions.

Staff use a suitable range of observations and assessments to identify pupils' additional learning needs. In many cases, they respond to pupils' needs effectively, through a helpful range of supportive interventions. The 'Nook' class for pupils who need extra support, and the SRBs, provide nurturing, caring environments where staff respond carefully to pupils' needs. However, leaders do not ensure that pupils' individual plans identify improvement goals precisely enough. This means that staff can not consistently target support or evaluate pupils' progress sharply enough.

Leaders have established a suitable programme of monitoring activities to evaluate the work of the school. As a team, they review aspects, such as teachers' planning and pupils' progress. The quality of this is variable, as a minority of leaders do not focus on evaluating important aspects of teaching or learning sharply enough. This means that they do not always recognise when pupils are not supported or challenged sufficiently. Leaders use their evaluations to identify the aspects of the school most in need of improvement and align these with national priorities thoughtfully. Leaders plan manageable activities that involve staff at all levels in leading improvement. The headteacher has high expectations of staff and pupils and works thoughtfully to develop leaders at all levels. This has helped to ensure that the school has a track record of sustaining improvement over time.

Spotlight: Embedding improvement through distributed leadership.

As part of the strategy of developing leadership at all levels, all teachers take responsibility for leading priorities within the school's improvement plan. A designated teacher in each year group drives the implementation of each priority, ensuring that staff share ownership of improvement work and that agreed approaches are introduced consistently and embedded effectively. As a result, improvements have a positive impact on pupils' learning, for example in the strong development of pupils' digital skills across the school.

Leaders ensure that staff understand their roles and responsibilities suitably. They provide staff with appropriate professional learning to support them in their work, including staff working within the SRBs. However, there are shortcomings in the school's culture of safeguarding, such as in staff's understanding of procedures. Leaders have developed generally positive relationships with parents. They regularly share helpful information through newsletters and electronic communication. However, a minority of parents do not feel that the school listens to, or addresses their concerns, consistently enough.

Governors support the school well and have a sound understanding of its work. They are knowledgeable about the school's progress and fulfil their role as critical friends effectively. Although governors promote healthy eating and drinking appropriately through the curriculum and regular communication with parents, not all families consistently support these appropriate expectations.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils give cause for concern.

A site management concern was raised during the inspection, and the local authority has been notified.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

The school makes appropriate use of the pupil development grant. The school currently has a large deficit budget.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carers 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.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales

© Crown Copyright 2026: This report may be re used free of charge: (a) in any format or medium; and (b) may be translated by or on behalf of an education and/or training provider in respect of which this report relates into any language, in each case provided that it is re used and/or translated accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must, in each case (including in the case of a translation) be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 01/09/2026