

A report on
Ysgol Gymraeg Penalltau

Ysgol Penalltau
Cwm Calon
Penallta
Ystrad Mynach
CF82 6AP

Date of inspection: June 2026

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol Gymraeg Penalltau

Name of provider	Ysgol Gymraeg Penalltau
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	Welsh medium only
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	247
Pupils of statutory school age	187
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 the primary sector is 22.9%)	15.1%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 11.1%)	2.7%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	5.3%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	September 2024

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	09/10/2017
Start date of inspection	22/06/2026

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

The effective leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, combined with the support of conscientious staff, fosters pupils' well-being, care and support extremely effectively. They know pupils well and a homely and inclusive feeling supports pupils to develop positive attitudes towards their learning. Leaders have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Almost all pupils behave well during their activities, when learning independently, and when playing with their friends. Pupils make valuable use of the outdoor learning areas, including the woodland, which contributes to their wellbeing and enthusiasm for learning.

Teachers ensure that the learning experiences engage and maintain pupils' interest successfully. They support pupils to develop their independent learning skills from a young age which includes choosing beneficial ways of presenting their work, and offering ideas for activities they would like to complete.

Practical activities across the learning areas enrich pupils' understanding of the themes well and support most to make sound progress across many skills. However, pupils' accuracy, expression, and fluency in Welsh reading skills have not developed to the same extent as their English reading skills.

During learning sessions, many staff use purposeful questioning and offer effective verbal feedback to support pupils' learning. In the strongest practices, staff respond constructively to pupils' responses and adapt provision appropriately, promoting progress in learning successfully. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to respond to staff's feedback to improve their work.

Staff have positive relationships with parents, including parents of pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). Staff support pupils who need further support purposefully. As a result, most pupils with ALN make sound progress during their time at the school. The way in which staff work effectively with pupils and their families to improve attendance and punctuality is a strength.

Parents express pride in the fact that their children attend this welcoming school and appreciate the wide range of experiences, as well as the excellent care and attention to promoting wellbeing that is provided by the school.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Develop pupils' Welsh reading skills
- R2 Ensure consistency in the effective practices for giving pupils feedback to support them further to improve their work.

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

The headteacher's robust leadership, together with the highly effective support of the deputy headteacher, sets a clear strategic direction for developing the school and creates a culture that promotes continuous improvement. Leaders convey their vision clearly to develop a learning environment in which 'respect, willingness and belonging' are at the core of the whole school community.

Leaders have high expectations of themselves, staff and pupils and promote a caring, hard-working and Welsh ethos that permeates all the school's activities. Staff work together by effectively modelling an infectious enthusiasm for work that sets a positive example for pupils. This supports a warm atmosphere that promotes a sense of belonging and ensures that most pupils are happy to turn to any member of staff and their peers, as required.

The curriculum is planned carefully and teachers provide learning activities that develop pupils' sense of 'cynefin' successfully by considering the local, Welsh and wider world context purposefully. Relevant visitors raise pupils' aspirations and enrich their learning experiences. There are purposeful opportunities for pupils to influence their learning. As a result, they develop as independent learners who succeed in solving problems confidently.

Spotlight: Developing the youngest pupils' independence and attitudes to learning

The provision for the youngest pupils meets their needs effectively and ensures that they make good progress. Staff place a strong emphasis on providing early learning

experiences that promote pupils' social and physical development, as well as the skills they need to be ready to learn. As these skills develop, increasing opportunities are provided for pupils to contribute their ideas and influence their activities and experiences in the learning areas. This, in turn, boosts their enthusiasm and engagement with learning. Staff ensure that provision builds effectively on previous experiences as pupils move from the nursery class to the next stages in their learning.

Staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and digital skills, as well as opportunities to apply them across the curriculum. A range of stimulating activities build on pupils' previous learning skills effectively.

The provision ensures that the youngest pupils develop their ability to speak Welsh at an early stage. This is an obvious strength and has a positive effect on pupils' pride in the language and their heritage. From an early age, many pupils' Welsh reading skills develop robustly. The skills of the majority of pupils continue to develop as they move up the school. However, pupils' Welsh reading skills are not as well-developed as they are in English.

Staff provide suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematics skills. Most pupils develop their numeracy skills effectively across the curriculum and apply them confidently in a range of contexts.

Most pupils' digital skills develop successfully. They use these skills purposefully to support their learning across the areas of learning and experience. The youngest pupils direct a programmable toy confidently to move along a specific path. The older pupils develop their data-handling skills, for example by using spreadsheets and creating multimedia presentations for a range of purposes.

Staff provide purposeful opportunities to develop the older pupils' creative skills, for example as they emulate the style of a famous artist. The provision includes opportunities for the youngest pupils to experiment with creating sounds with a range of musical instruments in the outdoor areas. Stimulating sessions in the woodland area provide effective learning experiences that promote the development of pupils' physical and social skills, as well as their sense of appreciation of the natural environment around them.

The supportive working relationship that exists between pupils and staff is a strength. Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and create an environment that encourages a willingness to learn and enjoyment. Most pupils work together effectively and support each other to overcome challenges and, in doing so, develop resilience and the ability to persevere.

During learning sessions, many staff question pupils and offer verbal feedback skilfully which promotes pupils' progress purposefully. In the best practice, they respond to pupils' comments and adapt the provision purposefully. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to consider staff's feedback and improve their written work.

Staff meet pupils' wellbeing and learning needs purposefully within the inclusive ethos that is at the core of provision. Staff know pupils thoroughly and provide purposeful activities that support most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), to make sound progress.

Working jointly with the families of ALN pupils and establishing a dedicated 'nest' space that tailors learning experiences for them has had a positive effect on their wellbeing and happiness and improved attendance and punctuality rates.

Many pupils develop rich personal and social skills by being members of various committees in the school which foster co-operation and showing empathy to others. Although pupils take their responsibilities seriously and are beginning to develop useful leadership skills, they have limited influence on improvements and school life as a result of adults over-leading. Almost all pupils take part in purposeful health and wellbeing activities and understand the purpose of staying healthy and the effect that this has on the body and mind.

Leaders promote an ethos of continuous improvement successfully. They ensure that there are robust arrangements for evaluating the quality of provision and the effect on pupils' progress.

The headteacher and teachers make extremely effective use of a good range of first-hand evidence that supports a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors are supportive of the school's work. They know the school and the community it serves well. They play a direct role in the school's improvement processes by playing a central role in learning journeys and discussing feedback following scrutiny of pupils' work. As a result, their identification of the school's strengths and areas for development is thorough.

The headteacher and governors monitor the budget carefully. They ensure that decisions on expenditure are linked sensibly to the school's improvement priorities, such as investments in the woodland area, for example. As a result, the support provides purposeful support to pupils to improve their learning and to support their emotional wellbeing.

Leaders have established a positive culture that provides purposeful professional learning opportunities for all staff. For example, a member of staff has undertaken the role of

supporting the additional needs co-ordinator to ensure progression and continuity in the experiences that are offered to pupils across the school. The headteacher encourages teachers to develop leadership skills including attending the local authority's leadership training. Staff occasionally share effective practices with local schools, which provide purposeful opportunities for them to celebrate and share their work with other professionals. For example, a team member has shared practices with schools in the area about establishing and sharing a whole-school vision.

Leaders and staff establish strong links with parents and the wider community. For example, during health and wellbeing week, pupils develop their physical skills by undertaking sessions with a range of local sports clubs. In addition, as part of the week, members of the community discuss their work and experiences with pupils which, in turn, promotes their aspirations for the future. Parents are extremely proud of the school and appreciate the excellent care that is provided.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are not a cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for the management of the site are not a cause for concern.

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

Leaders and governors manage the school's funding appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

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.

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