



Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Llanharan Primary School

**Llwyn Brain Terrace
Llanharan
Pontyclun
RCT
CF72 9PW**

Date of inspection: March 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Llanharan Primary School

Name of provider	Llanharan Primary School
Local authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Non-Denominational
Number of pupils on roll	162
Pupils of statutory school age	149
Number in nursery classes	26
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 23.0%)	37.6%
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 16.1%)	38.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2014
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	02/06/2014
Start date of inspection	27/03/2023

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.

Overview

Pupils at Llanharan Primary are happy in school and enjoy attending every day. They feel safe and well cared for, and trust that adults will always support them appropriately. During their time in school, many pupils, including those who are vulnerable and those with additional needs, make satisfactory progress in most areas of learning. Pupils' well-being is at the core of the school. Staff work effectively to ensure that it is a thoughtful, inclusive and supportive environment for all pupils and their families. Relationships across the school are strong.

Many pupils enter the school with literacy and numeracy skills below the expected level, with a very few considerably below the expected level. As pupils move through the school, they make satisfactory progress in most aspects of learning including reading and digital skills, and in their understanding of mathematical concepts. However, they do not apply their learning across the curriculum at the same level as in specific English and maths lessons. Pupils' use of Welsh, and their writing skills in English, are underdeveloped.

Leaders, staff and pupils are in the very early stages of designing their school curriculum to align with the expectations of the Curriculum for Wales and to reflect the environment and community in which they live. Leaders regularly review the school's work against its improvement priorities. However, leaders' monitoring activity does not always pick up on important areas of teaching and learning that need improving, such as how effectively teachers plan and how feedback helps pupils to improve their work and make the expected progress as they move through the school.

Recommendations

- R1 Develop consistent and rigorous approaches to monitoring that focus fully on the quality of teaching and learning
- R2 Ensure consistency in the quality of teaching and learning and pupil feedback
- R3 Develop the curriculum to ensure that pupils' knowledge and skills build progressively from nursery to Year 6
- R4 Improve standards of writing
- R5 Improve pupils' Welsh oracy skills

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will work with the local authority to review the school's progress.

Main evaluation

Learning

At least half of the pupils begin school with knowledge and skills below that expected for their age. A majority of pupils' language skills are particularly weak. Over time, many make suitable progress in a majority of areas of learning. However, their progress in areas, such as writing in English and Welsh oracy, is not strong enough. Most pupils eligible for free school meals make similar progress to their peers. Most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make effective progress towards their individual goals and targets.

A majority of pupils begins in nursery with weak communication skills. Many learn quickly to listen to adults and to give short responses to questions about their everyday lives. As they progress into Year 1 and Year 2, many pupils begin to express their ideas clearly and thoughtfully. Many collaborate well and chat purposefully in small groups. By Year 6, many pupils are confident to talk to adults and to each other. They share ideas in useful detail and listen well to one another.

Overall, many pupils make suitable progress in developing their reading skills. The school is starting to build a culture of reading and pupils enjoy the refurbished classroom reading areas. The school's focus over the last 12 months on improving reading is starting to have a positive impact and many pupils are beginning to make appropriate progress in improving their reading and comprehension skills from low starting points. By Year 2, many pupils identify and use phonic blends to read simple words, for example 'ar' to make words, such as farm and car. By Year 6 many pupils enjoy reading and choose their own books to read independently.

Across the school, pupils' progress in developing their writing skills is too slow. Pupils' standards of writing are a cause for concern and this as an area in need of improvement. Pupils in nursery and reception start from a low baseline. Over time, they start to understand that their writing can convey meaning and begin to use emergent writing techniques to communicate simply. Many pupils in Years 1 and 2 build on these skills slowly. By Year 2, although many pupils are beginning to communicate meaningfully in writing, they are often unable to spell common key words accurately or make plausible attempts. Many, even the more able, mix upper and low case letters within words and across their writing. By the end of Years 5 and 6, most pupils understand how to structure different types of writing, for example a diary entry, biography or newspaper report. A minority use a limited range of engaging vocabulary. More able pupils write well for a suitable range of purposes, for example selecting words carefully to explain, describe or persuade. However, too many pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 do not write well and at length across a range of purposes, or in enough detail. Many make repeated errors with spelling, punctuation and grammar, which a majority of teachers do not identify well enough. This slows pupils' progress in developing their writing.

In the younger classes, very few pupils develop their Welsh vocabulary appropriately. In reception pupils respond to greetings, for example 'bore da' and 'prynhawn da'. By Year 2 the majority of pupils repeat a few sentence patterns, such as 'what is the weather?' From Years 3 to 6, many pupils understand the phrases that are being

used in all classes as the sentences of the week, such as 'what are you wearing'. Many reply to these questions appropriately. However, in the main, pupils' responses and vocabulary are limited.

Many pupils make suitable progress in developing their mathematical skills. In nursery, a majority of pupils begin to learn to touch-count suitably accurately, for example counting animals in the sand tray. By Year 2, many pupils are confident counting on in 2s and in 5s. They identify patterns in sets of numbers well. Many transfer their number skills to their play activities independently, for example using their doubling skills when playing in the outdoors. In Year 4, many pupils have a suitable understanding of the relationship between fractions and percentages and, by Year 6, many pupils apply their maths skills to a variety of different contexts and explain their thinking clearly.

The youngest pupils develop confidence with digital skills quickly. For example, in reception, pupils use tablet computers to play games to support their learning and develop simple problem-solving skills. By Year 3 and Year 4, many pupils use their skills confidently to develop presentations that showcase their work creatively. They begin to build simple databases, such as those that contain facts on different animals. By Year 6, most pupils use a suitable range of apps and programmes to present their learning. A minority of pupils have a limited understanding of how to use spreadsheets. Overall, many pupils have suitable skills, but these do not always build progressively enough as they move through the school.

Throughout the school, many pupils develop effective creative skills. Younger pupils demonstrate their creativity well in response to stimuli, such as books they have read. They express their ideas about what a view from a window across a city may look like imaginatively, using watercolours and by making detailed models.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils feel safe and happy in school and enjoy attending. They feel well supported by a range of strategies, for example classroom worry boxes. They know what to do if they need to talk to someone and are confident that adults will listen. Most older pupils regulate their emotions successfully, know how to use safe spaces and the importance of taking time out away from others when necessary. Nearly all pupils are proud of their school and enjoy sharing their work and what they have achieved. They are polite and friendly, interacting well with visitors. Most pupils socialise well at playtimes and lunchtimes, showing mutual respect to adults and their peers. Most pupils behave well in classes. They understand the school's rewards and sanctions well and are keen to earn 'golden time'.

Many pupils bring fruit to school, and understand the importance of eating healthily and hydration. Most pupils have a good understanding of the benefits of exercise and take part in physical exercise activities such as gymnastics and yoga. They understand how to stay safe online. For example, they know not to open suspicious emails and to immediately inform an adult when they have concerns. They understand the importance of not speaking to strangers online or giving out personal information.

Most pupils develop well as capable learners. They listen attentively to teachers' instructions, concentrate, engage enthusiastically and have positive attitudes to their work. They remain focused and purposeful when facing difficulties and seek solutions when the first approach is unsuccessful. For example, when building towers to withstand the effects of an earthquake, they attempt various techniques until they are successful. From an early age, most pupils show resilience in their work, and persevere for a sustained period, particularly when faced with a challenge. However, across the school, a few pupils find focusing for longer periods of time difficult.

In most cases, pupils demonstrate respect for the contributions of others. For example, at the end of a lesson when evaluating the Tudor portraits they have created, they make positive comments about each other's work and refer to the work of original artists in their feedback. When given the opportunity, most pupils respond positively to teachers' verbal feedback. Older pupils support others in the class well. For example, they model their thinking to their peers well and a few help other pupils explore their misconceptions.

Nearly all pupils respond enthusiastically when given opportunities to decide how to present their work. For example, when pupils created their own law to present to the Senedd, they chose to produce songs and posters to pitch their ideas. Nearly all pupils are starting to become more ethically informed citizens and to understand the importance of giving aid to those in need, for example by donating to earthquake victims in Turkey. Many older pupils are beginning to explore issues around gender. For example, they understand the benefits of creating a gender-neutral mascot to acknowledge their understanding of diversity and people making their own choices.

Nearly all pupils on the school council understand their roles in improving the school, make valuable contributions and take their roles seriously. For example, they helped to develop an action plan for attendance and contributed purposefully to the planning of an outdoor area. Pupils in the 'Eco-Team' organised and led a 'swap shop' using tokens to recycle clothes and raising money to buy plants for the school grounds.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school's curriculum covers a broad range of topics and gives pupils a variety of engaging learning experiences across the areas of learning and experience. For example, in Year 4 and Year 5, pupils make informative stop-go animations to help them learn about volcanoes. These help to develop pupils' team working and creative skills well. In addition, the school provides pupils with interesting wider experiences, such as teaching all pupils from Year 3 onwards to play the Ukulele. This helps to support pupils' engagement with their learning.

The school currently organises learning under set, half-termly themes that cover topics, such as space and the human body. In line with the Curriculum for Wales, teachers are beginning to develop more bespoke learning experiences that are informed by the school's values, its location and its community. For example, the school's 'Llanharan and coal' topic helps pupils to understand the history and geography of the local area. However, at present, the curriculum does not build well enough on pupils' knowledge, skills or experiences as they progress through the school. As a result, pupils' skills do not always develop systematically or progressively enough.

In a few cases, pupils are beginning to have a purposeful input into how they present their work. For example, they choose whether to write songs or create posters to present their ideas for a new law. However, at present, pupils have too few opportunities to meaningfully influence what they learn.

A minority of younger pupils benefit from a range of learning experiences based around the philosophies of foundation learning. They experience an effective balance of adult and pupil led learning, purposeful learning in the outdoors, and opportunities to be creative and direct their own learning. For example, in Year 1 and 2, pupils choose how to represent their ideas of what a book character might see when looking out of a window by using watercolours and building detailed models. These activities develop pupils' independence and thinking skills, and promote a positive attitude to learning. However, these practices are not developed well enough in the nursery and in the reception class. For example, learning is not always based well enough in pupils' real-life experiences and there are too few opportunities to learn outdoors.

The curriculum provides pupils with a few opportunities to practise and to develop their literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum. For example, pupils use their digital skills to research and record facts for a topic on predators. However, at present these activities are too inconsistent and there are too few occasions when pupils write at length or develop their numeracy skills in purposeful ways. Similarly, opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills are too inconsistent. The whole-school weekly phrase raises the profile of the language suitably, and all classes have a short daily session that helps pupils to practise a few language patterns appropriately. However, in a majority of classes, teachers do not provide pupils with wider opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills, such as extending the sentences they know to include more detail.

Teachers plan well for pupils to learn about the history and culture of Wales throughout the curriculum. For example, younger pupils examine what school was like in Victorian Wales and compare modern Cardiff with Llanharan. The importance of the contribution to the world and modern society of people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds is woven through the curriculum well. For example, pupils learn about influential figures, such as Katherine Johnson, the mathematician who made vital calculations for NASA, and study books by author and former children's laureate, Malorie Blackman OBE. This helps pupils to understand the importance of valuing everybody equally.

All teachers have strong working relationships with pupils. This helps to create an atmosphere where pupils are happy to ask questions or ask for help in the classroom. Many teachers provide clear explanations, encourage pupils to think for themselves and model language well. This helps them to develop subject specific vocabulary effectively. However, in a majority of lessons, teachers focus too much on what they want pupils to do and are not always clear enough about what they want pupils to learn. This means that pupils' skills do not always build progressively, and pupils are not always able to evaluate their own learning successfully enough.

All teachers use learning support staff effectively. These adults make a positive and material contribution to pupils' learning. However, teachers do not always plan

learning that supports or challenges all pupils well enough. As a result, they expect a few pupils to complete tasks that are either too difficult or not sufficiently challenging.

In a minority of sessions, teachers monitor pupils' learning as the lesson progresses. They identify misconceptions or errors and provide pupils with useful verbal feedback that enables them to improve their learning. However, this does not happen consistently enough, and so pupils continue with misconceptions and repeat the same errors. In many cases, teachers' written feedback is not helpful enough to allow pupils to understand how and where they need to make improvement to their work. Teachers are beginning to provide pupils with a few appropriate opportunities to evaluate their own learning and that of their peers. However, these strategies are still at an early stage of development.

Care, support and guidance

At Llanharan Primary, staff place a high priority on the well-being of the pupils. This is a strength of the school. The school is a very caring, nurturing community, where staff and pupils know each other well and show a high level of respect for each other. Through many diverse programmes, staff support pupils' well-being and emotional needs well. Teachers and learning assistants know pupils well and respond sensitively and effectively to their social and emotional needs. This supportive ethos enables pupils to develop a positive attitude to their learning and is a strength of the school.

The school's provision for pupils with ALN is a major strength of the school. Staff identify pupils' individual needs very well at an early stage. This means that the school intervenes quickly and appropriately to support all pupils with ALN with bespoke tailored support. The school's universal offer is comprehensive. For example, as part of the universal provision, staff implement a programme to develop pupils' speech and language development. This helps pupils to improve their speaking skills and language acquisition. The school's tracking system is highly effective in finding out whether support programmes are, or are not, effective and provision is subsequently tailored to meet the needs of the individual very successfully. Pupils' progress in reading is tracked very effectively by the ALN co-ordinator, resulting in pupils making steady progress from their starting points. The ALN co-ordinator works very well with parents through drop-in sessions to support families. Individual behaviour plans strengthen the school's understanding of the needs of the child.

The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about different beliefs and religions, such as through visits from representatives of a local church group and visits to the local mosque. Collective worship allows pupils to reflect on their beliefs and values effectively. The school provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to learn about important issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion through a range of activities, such as during assemblies about Martin Luther King and Betty Campbell.

There are appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Nearly all pupils are encouraged to drink water and eat fruit at breaktimes. The school makes good provision to help pupils stay safe online, for example through the school curriculum and workshops with the police liaison officer.

Through pupil voice groups, the school provides pupils with effective opportunities to participate in decision-making and to promote school values. For example, the Criw Cymraeg lead 'brawddeg yr wythnos' (sentence of the week) and support the younger pupils with Welsh patterns, and digital leaders support younger children in the school with their digital skills. As a result, pupils engage positively with school life and feel proud of their school. The school provides a variety of extra-curricular activities, such as a film club that gives pupils opportunities to participate in the arts and to review films critically.

The school is starting to provide learning experiences for pupils to find out about the culture and heritage of Wales and identify with the local area. For example, units of work on the history of Llanharan colliery and research into names on the local cenotaph in the village have provided pupils with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the impact of mining on the local area.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school, with the safety and well-being of all at its core. All staff have received appropriate safeguarding training. They are aware of the procedures to follow should they have a concern about a pupil. Governors have attended relevant training and have a sound understanding of procedures and processes. The school has good procedures in place to monitor and improve attendance. Staff work closely with the local authority to challenge and support families whose children have poor attendance.

Leadership and management

Leaders at Llanharan Primary school have created a caring and inclusive environment where pupils and staff feel a strong sense of belonging. They have established a vision for the school focused on developing pupils' well-being. All staff work together to encourage pupils to be responsible and respectful and, as a result, behaviour is good, and pupils feel safe. School leaders' relationships with parents are effective. This has a positive impact on pupils' well-being.

Leaders undertake regular monitoring and evaluation activities, such as learning walks, lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work. The areas of focus covered this year include reading and writing, implementation of the Curriculum for Wales, and improving pupils' well-being. These link to the school's improvement priorities well. However, monitoring activities do not focus well enough on improving teaching and ensuring pupil progress in all classes. For example, when developing a feedback policy, leaders have not ensured that teachers apply it consistently across the school and that it leads to all pupils understanding their next steps in learning.

Members of the governing body have a sound knowledge of the school and are supportive. They meet regularly with leaders and staff and this helps them to be aware of new developments and gain an overview of pupil progress. However, leaders do not provide them with enough relevant information about the school's progress for governors to be able to challenge and support the work of the school effectively.

Performance management arrangements are appropriate. Targets link well to school priorities as well as teachers' individual areas for improvement. Professional learning appropriately supports the school's improvement priorities. Staff training to improve

provision for pupils with ALN is effective. Support staff attend a beneficial range of training and share their knowledge with colleagues to disseminate good practice. This has led to improvements in the quality of ALN provision and the progress of nearly all pupils with ALN. However, other professional learning opportunities have not improved outcomes for pupils as successfully, for example in supporting the progressive development of pupils' writing skills.

The school addresses a majority of national and local priorities suitably. It has been particularly successful in implementing ALN reform. As a result, nearly all pupils with ALN make very good progress towards their individual learning goals. However, the school's work on implementing the Curriculum for Wales is at a very early stage of development. Provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills and the provision for the Welsh language are also underdeveloped. Leaders have a sound understanding of their responsibilities in relation to keeping pupils safe and have established a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Governors make suitable arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking amongst pupils.

Leaders manage the school budget, the pupil development grant and other grant funding effectively, and target spending well. For example, to improve pupils' well-being, leaders successfully invested in professional learning around behaviour management and strategies for supporting those with specific needs. As a result, staff now deal confidently with any issues that arise and nearly all pupils' behaviour is good.

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

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

This document has been translated by Trosol (English to Welsh).