



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

A report on

Bryn Awel Primary School

**Eglwys Fan
Rhymney
NP22 5JJ**

Date of inspection: March 2024

by

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

About Bryn Awel Primary School

Name of provider	Bryn Awel Primary School
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	130
Pupils of statutory school age	102
Number in nursery classes	15
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 23.7%)	46.6%
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 13.2%)	8.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	05/06/2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	05/10/2015
Start date of inspection	11/03/2024

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

Bryn Awel Primary is a caring school where staff work closely with pupils and their families to develop strong working relationships. Across the school, most pupils behave well and show kindness and care towards one another.

Following a period of change in leadership, both with senior leaders and the governing body, there are emerging strengths developing. Leaders are developing self-evaluation processes to evaluate and monitor the progress pupils make and these are beginning to have a positive impact, especially in reading and writing. However, overall, leaders' use of self-evaluation and monitoring to support improvement planning is broad and lengthy and does not focus well enough on the most important areas for to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

Many pupils make good progress based on their starting points in reading and writing. Most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make suitable progress. Across the school, teachers have a good understanding of how to develop pupils' reading skills and successfully promote the importance of reading. They also work well to develop pupils' writing skills. However, teachers' subject knowledge of mathematics varies and, as a result, they do not always build on pupils' mathematical skills progressively. Opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum are limited. Teachers' use of assessments to provide suitable learning varies.

Leaders share a vision for curriculum design and work closely with families and the local community to strengthen links that will help improve the learning opportunities for all pupils. There are beneficial links with local partners and businesses and this helps enrich the activities in which pupils participate. Leaders and staff work with cluster schools effectively to develop their subject knowledge on Curriculum for Wales (CfW) and use this information well to support their curriculum design. There are emerging strengths in some areas of learning, for example the development of pupils' skills in expressive arts. Leaders work with families and other partners to improve the attendance of pupils. Whilst these are beginning to have a positive impact, attendance rates overall remain too low.

The headteacher is passionate and determined to strengthen standards at the school so that pupils access a broad range of learning experiences and develop a range of skills to help them in their future lives. She works closely with the governing body to manage the school's budget effectively to support the costs of school trips and visits, and to provide good quality resources. Recent changes to the indoor learning environments set high standards of expectation and create calm, safe spaces for children to learn. Leaders and staff have a shared desire to work together to raise pupils' aspirations and to provide high levels of care and nurture their pupils. Within a short space of time, leaders and staff have worked effectively to raise standards and broaden experiences for pupils at Bryn Awel Primary.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve self-evaluation, monitoring and improvement planning to ensure that the focus is on the most important areas in need of development
- R2 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment
- R3 Provide purposeful learning opportunities to ensure that pupils develop their mathematical skills progressively
- R4 Continue to improve attendance

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at school, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible for free school meals, make good progress from their individual starting points.

Many pupils make suitable progress in developing their oracy skills. Often from a very low starting point, many younger pupils make effective progress in developing their speaking skills. For example, they respond to simple questions during their family time sessions and develop their vocabulary when expressing their feelings. As pupils move through the school, they continue to develop their speaking and listening skills suitably, extending their use of vocabulary during presentations and debates.

Across the school, most pupils make good progress in their reading skills. Most younger pupils use a range of strategies to read familiar and unfamiliar words, including linking letters to the sounds they make and building these sounds to read simple words. Many Year 1 and Year 2 pupils begin to read with suitable accuracy and fluency. As they progress, many older pupils read a range of more complex texts and can skim and scan for information.

Most younger pupils make good progress in developing their writing skills. They begin to record their ideas through mark making, forming legible letters and writing simple words. For example, younger pupils use a range of materials to create pictures and form letters. Many older pupils write effectively in a range of different forms choosing vocabulary carefully and using capital letters and full stops appropriately. As their skills develop, a majority of pupils use adjectives, rhetorical questions and alliteration to enhance their work. For example, many pupils

confidently write stories about the life of an evacuee sent to live in the Welsh Valleys during World War 2. However, overall, many pupils do not apply their writing skills effectively to support other areas of learning.

Many pupils develop their Welsh language skills appropriately. The youngest pupils begin to develop their Welsh language knowledge when greeting one another, counting, recognising colours and through familiar songs. As pupils progress through the school, they begin to extend their knowledge and use of Welsh, asking and answering questions about themselves, and their family. Many older pupils begin to hold a basic conversation to talk about where they live, their likes and dislikes and a few talk about their feelings and illnesses.

The majority of pupils make suitable progress in their numerical skills. Younger pupils develop their number knowledge well, for example when counting items of fruit eaten by the Hungry Caterpillar and matching these to written numbers. They also develop their mathematical language suitably to compare height when building towers. By Years 3 and 4, many pupils add and subtract 3-digit numbers confidently using a column method and a few pupils explain how they solve these calculations mentally, describing the strategies they use, such as rounding numbers up and down. By Years 5 and 6, many pupils consolidate their understanding of numbers to add and subtract 4- and 5-digit numbers, and to multiply and divide two digit numbers. Many older pupils order numbers correctly to create timelines of historical events. However, the majority of pupils do not develop and make progress in a range of mathematical skills and rarely recognise the value of mathematics in the real world.

Most pupils use digital equipment confidently and develop basic digital skills as they move through the school. Many younger pupils give logical instructions to an electronic toy to direct its movement around a path. They enjoy using digital games to support their learning in literacy, numeracy and creative skills. Many older pupils develop editing techniques when creating presentations and use digital devices successfully to create news reports about the reopening of the local library in their community. Many older pupils begin to use spreadsheets, for example when creating a data file about Leonardo da Vinci using photographs and text from internet searches. Overall, the majority of pupils develop basic digital skills to support their learning.

Most pupils are developing their thinking and creative skills suitably. Younger pupils select materials to create and design shops for their role-play areas. Older pupils develop their creativity to make collages and weaving, using natural and man-made fabrics, reflecting the style of a local Welsh artist with whom they have been working. Many pupils develop suitable physical skills, through play, participation in sports events and lessons.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils are polite and respectful towards staff, visitors and their peers. They follow the school's expectations of being kind and caring. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards learning and are proud of their work. They apply themselves readily to a task and are confident in seeking help where needed. Most pupils feel safe and secure in school and know whom to approach to discuss any concerns. For example, they seek advice from the peer mediator pupil group to help them maintain positive

relationships on the yard. Many pupils understand how to keep themselves and others safe and are beginning to understand online safety.

Most pupils are happy, confident individuals. They know about the importance of healthy eating and drinking and appreciate the benefits of physical exercise. Pupils speak with interest about the learning opportunities that they experience in and out of the classroom. For example, older pupils talk with pride about the models they made and sold to fund a visit from a famous Welsh designer.

Most pupils feel their views are valued, for example younger pupils used their ideas, following a local walk, to develop their role play into a shop. Older pupils have improved the displays in their reading corners and categorised the books according to their favourite authors. Pupils who undertake the various leadership roles do so enthusiastically and take their responsibilities seriously. For example, digital champions have tested and promoted Welsh software programmes to enhance Welsh in the classrooms and the Money Makers group have developed maths questions in Welsh throughout the school.

Most pupils engage in their learning, indoors and outdoors. They behave well and follow instructions to complete tasks. Older pupils are beginning to respond to feedback they are given to talk about their learning, reflecting on their successes and correcting errors in their work. Many pupils work effectively as individuals and are supportive when working in pairs. When given the opportunity, many pupils work well alongside one another and are beginning to work collaboratively, for example when discussing and sharing information on celebrations and festivals in the Christian and Islamic faith.

Most pupils are becoming ethically informed citizens through their work on disabled athletes and show a developing awareness of fairness in the way they care for each other. Many pupils are developing an understanding of the rights of a child led by the rights respecting pupil group. They develop cultural awareness through studying different religions, cooking food from a variety of cultures and by taking part in projects about anti-racism. Most pupils are developing their awareness of global citizenship through their donations to local and national charities and support of the nearby food bank.

Many pupils are beginning to develop an awareness of sustainability through a variety of opportunities to work with natural materials, including the apples grown in the school's orchard, which they then used to make apple crumble.

Teaching and learning experiences

Leaders and teachers are developing a clear vision for the school curriculum that focuses on motivating everyone 'to nurture, to grow and to succeed'. In response to curriculum reform, they consider the principles of Curriculum for Wales and are developing staff knowledge, skills and expertise to enable them to design a meaningful curriculum for Bryn Awel Primary.

Teachers plan a range of suitable learning experiences in some areas of learning. In the most effective examples, teachers plan purposeful learning activities that build on a range of pupils' skills to create a final product. For example, pupils across the

school work on class art projects to develop and refine their artistic skills and this work is used to create an art gallery that parents and families are invited to visit. The planning and provision to develop pupils' skills through expressive arts are developing well, and this is evident in the quality of work pupils produce. However, the quality of curriculum design and opportunities for pupils to build on their creative and problem-solving skills in other areas of learning varies. Curriculum design is at an early stage of development.

Most teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about their locality and where they are in Wales. Teachers plan local visits and trips to museums to enhance pupils' experiences and to gather hands-on information about the town they live in, past and present. Many teachers promote the culture of Wales and the Welsh language and provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills, both in informal and informal situations. Teachers develop worthwhile links with members of their community and use this to provide meaningful learning opportunities for pupils. For example, pupils visit the local residential home for dementia residents and this helps pupils develop an understanding of how to help care and support the elderly in their village. There are strong links with the local St David's Church, who regularly visit school and this supports the pupils' awareness of community and spirituality. Older pupils develop their awareness and understanding of the impact of poverty when collecting items to support the local food bank and when organising a 'uniform swap shop'. The school's provision to develop pupils' cultural awareness, including that of Wales, is developing well.

Teachers provide a range of additional learning experiences through after-school clubs and residential trips. Older pupils enjoy annual residential trips and there are several opportunities for pupils to develop their physical skills in after-school clubs.

Through themed weeks and events, teachers provide important opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of diversity, minority ethnic communities and LGBTQ+ issues. For example, pupils learn about different religions and cultures and consider the strict dietary rules in these religions. During Show Racism the Red card day, pupils create posters to highlight the importance of anti-racism.

The school has worked effectively to improve the provision to develop pupils' literacy skills. Teachers provide a range of opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills, including circle time activities to talk about feelings and emotions, and presentation opportunities for older pupils to share their knowledge and information on topics of interest, such as Ramadan. Across the school, most teachers promote reading effectively to engage and enthuse pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge when teaching reading and use a range of strategies effectively to develop pupils' reading and comprehension skills. When developing pupils' writing skills, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes, including newspapers, advertisements and poems. In the most effective lessons, teachers build on pupils' writing skills to improve their spelling and correct use of punctuation. However, opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills across the curriculum vary.

Across the school, teachers provide a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical skills. They place an emphasis on the development of number skills and plan repeated opportunities for pupils to consolidate their understanding of

place value, addition and subtraction. However, teachers do not plan for the progression of pupils' number skills well enough and as a result pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Additional opportunities for pupils to develop skills in other areas of mathematics, including shape and measures, are limited and, too often, these activities do not link to real-life maths well enough. Overall, opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical and numeracy skills are underdeveloped.

Most teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their digital skills. Younger pupils draft, edit and publish facts about artefacts from the past. They use digital technology to produce fact sheets, including images and text on famous artists, including Leonardo da Vinci. Older pupils gather data to create simple bar graphs and use green-screen to create news reports.

The quality of teaching and use of assessment varies across the school. Where it is effective, teachers use assessment information to plan suitable learning activities that build on pupils' existing skills and knowledge. They use questioning effectively to challenge and support pupils and ensure learning activities are purposeful. However, teacher subject knowledge varies across the school and this affects how well teachers plan for pupils' progression of a range of skills across all areas of learning. The effective use of assessment is also inconsistent and too many teachers do not use this information well enough to plan lessons that meet the needs of all pupils. Recently, teachers have developed their approach towards providing feedback to pupils and are beginning to give older pupils the opportunity to respond and improve their work. However, this is at an early stage of development.

Care, support and guidance

The school is an inclusive and welcoming community that values all pupils and adults. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging staff and pupils to care for each other and the supportive and friendly working relationships between staff and pupils is a strength of the school. This is reflected in most pupils' good behaviour and their positive attitudes towards their learning and school life.

There is effective provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). Staff gather useful information about pupils' needs at an early stage and successfully provide support through a variety of interventions. Staff regularly monitor and evaluate the progress that pupils make and adjust the support where necessary. Experienced learning support staff know and understand pupils' needs well. The majority work skilfully with pupils, communicating clearly with them and helping them to engage with their learning. Where appropriate, additional outside agencies such as health services and the education psychologist provide further support for school staff. As a result, over their time at the school, most pupils with ALN make suitable progress.

The provision for pupils' social and emotional needs is highly effective. There are regular opportunities for pupils to discuss their well-being across the school. Younger pupils place their name on a feelings chart whilst older pupils use pebbles to illustrate their emotions and leaflets to advise them on resolving disputes with their friends. Staff create inclusive learning environments and safe spaces for pupils to explore their senses and communicate their emotions and feelings. The family liaison officer

complements this work by supporting parents to discuss social and emotional issues, such as peer pressure and self-belief.

Staff develop strong links with the local community and organise numerous, beneficial opportunities for pupils to take part in performances and events that develop their confidence and self-expression. Parents regularly attend assemblies, workshops and art exhibitions that help them to support their child's learning at home. For example, parents attend weekly maths sessions where they work with the pupils on different concepts and learn about coding by making a moving vehicle.

The school promotes pupils' moral, spiritual and social development successfully. Staff encourage pupils to contribute to the community so that they have opportunities to help others. For example, pupils visited the local old people's home to take part in a joint Remembrance Day service and invited the residents to the Christmas dress rehearsal.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding and the arrangements to keep all pupils safe are effective and give no cause for concern. Leaders work closely with the local authority to manage the school site safely and to ensure that school provides a safe place for learning.

There are robust systems in place to track and monitor pupils' attendance. The headteacher and family liaison officer use a range of rewards and activities to promote the importance of good attendance. They identify pupils who do not attend school regularly and work closely with these families. However, despite these measures and recent improvements, overall attendance remains too low.

Leadership and management

The recently appointed headteacher is committed to the school and recognises the value of developing positive relationships with staff, pupils, parents and the wider community. She liaises sensitively with staff to effectively manage change and ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the school. Within a short space of time, she has developed a staff team who work together effectively and who feel valued and appreciated.

Leaders listen to the views of parents and work effectively to develop positive relationships with families. They provide many valuable opportunities for families to participate in their child's learning and to develop their own skills and knowledge to support pupils at home. For example, during Celebration Week, parents visit classes to develop an understanding about festivals in world religions. This provides parents with knowledge to support an inclusive community as well as an opportunity to find out about their child's learning and the progress they are making. Leaders and staff provide termly events to encourage parents to visit school and find out about their child's topic. These events successfully develop a sense of purpose for pupils learning.

Recently, the headteacher developed a family learning room to offer a safe space for parents to visit the school and access support. The family liaison officer, alongside the headteacher, provides valuable guidance and information about agencies available to support families. A recent initiative to provide 'warm packs' containing

essential items such as jumpers, blankets and hot water bottles was appreciated by parents. The headteacher identifies families where the attendance of pupils is low and provides support to try to ensure more regular attendance. Despite these efforts and some improvements, attendance remains too low.

Leaders develop a shared vision for the school that aligns with Curriculum for Wales. Through the development of the 'RAISE' curriculum, leaders work closely to develop pupils' resilience, aspirations, independence, success and effort. They are beginning to design a curriculum that provides purposeful learning experiences for pupils to develop their skills and knowledge. Where this is successful, teachers plan beneficial activities that build on pupils' starting points and enable them to develop their skills progressively. For example, when developing pupils' writing skills, teachers provide real-life opportunities for pupils to write adverts informing parents about their art exhibition as part of their topic 'Creative Communities'. However, leaders and staff are at an early stage of curriculum development and opportunities to develop pupils' skills progressively vary across the school.

The headteacher has high expectations for standards in teaching and works conscientiously to improve staff subject knowledge and skills in all areas of learning. Leaders are successfully working with staff to raise standards in pupils' reading and writing skills, and these are beginning to have a positive impact on the progress pupils make. However, teachers' subject knowledge to raise standards in other areas of learning, especially mathematics, varies and teachers do not always plan successfully to build pupils' numeracy skills systematically. They rarely provide opportunities for pupils to apply these skills across the curriculum and in real-life situations. The quality of teaching and use of assessment varies across the school.

Leaders and staff use a range of monitoring activities to inform whole-school self-evaluation and use this information to identify school priorities. School improvement planning is broad and covers a range of areas for improvement, outlining activities to be completed. However, these activities do not focus well enough on the specific actions required to bring about change, especially to raise standards in teaching, for example using assessment to plan next steps in learning. Monitoring procedures are often process driven and do not focus well enough on pupil progress. Overall, leaders plan to address too many areas, and this prevents leaders and staff from focusing on the areas most in need of development.

Leaders identify the professional needs of staff appropriately and provide beneficial opportunities for teachers to work alongside advisors and other schools to strengthen their professional knowledge, practice and skills. This work is beginning to have a positive impact on the curriculum. For example, recent training to improve staff expertise when developing pupils' artistic skills is having a positive impact on standards in expressive arts. Leaders arrange training for staff to improve their Welsh language skills and this is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' use of Welsh across the school. Performance management targets are appropriate and linked to individual needs and school improvement priorities.

The governing body is supportive and keen to play an active part in school life. Governors recognise the challenges the school faces and work with leaders to bring about positive change and school improvement. They are beginning to make effective use of a 'governor questioning toolkit' to develop their skills and knowledge

so that they can make valuable contributions in meetings, to support and challenge. Recently, governors have engaged in school visits and this helps them gather an insight in to the management of the school and how well pupils progress. Governors ensure that there are appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. They support leaders effectively when managing and monitoring the school budget and ensure that grant funding is spent appropriately.

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:

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