



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

**A report on**

**Bryn Celyn Primary School**

**Bryn Celyn  
Pentwyn  
CF23 7EH**

**Date of inspection: May 2022**

**by**

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

## About Bryn Celyn Primary School

Name of provider	Bryn Celyn Primary School
Local authority	Cardiff
Language of the provider	English Medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	193
Pupils of statutory school age	153
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	34
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 21.3%)</i>	60.2%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 20.6%)</i>	8.5%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	31.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	Spring 2011
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	40869
Start date of inspection	16 May 2022
Additional information	At the time of the inspection, 74% of pupils were eligible for free school meals.

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](http://mylocalschool.gov.wales)

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

## Overview

Bryn Celyn Primary School gives its pupils a strong start in life. Leaders, staff and governors work very effectively in partnership with parents, the community and Cardiff local authority to help pupils develop the skills and values they need to be successful throughout their lives. Even though the pandemic has led to many challenges for the school and its community, the progress most pupils have made in their learning this year, is impressive.

Most pupils are eager to learn, behave very well and have clear views about what they want to achieve when they are older. They work hard in school, persevering to meet the challenges their teachers set them. Most learning is purposeful and motivates pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and digital skills effectively through topics that they help to plan. Staff keep a careful watch over how well each pupil is progressing in their learning and well-being. When needed, they provide valuable extra support that improves pupils' skills and raises their self-esteem.

The headteacher provides strong leadership. Working with a dedicated team of teachers and support staff, she makes sure that families and pupils are treated with care and respect. Pupils feel safe in Bryn Celyn and know that adults act in their best interests. Since the school's last inspection, leaders have been very successful in driving improvements to many important aspects of its work. They use monitoring processes well to check that staff across the school have consistently high expectations for pupils' learning. Leaders also evaluate whether the actions the school takes make a difference to pupils. For example, they recognise the need to continue to improve pupils' writing skills.

Governors are knowledgeable about the work of the school. They know the community well and are very supportive of the school's actions to raise pupils' aspirations and strengthen their attitudes to learning. Currently, governors do not ensure that there are effective arrangements to promote pupils' healthy eating and drinking.

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Continue to develop pupils' ability to write their own content and structure their writing independently, adapting their writing style to suit the audience and purpose
- R2 Strengthen arrangements to promote pupils' healthy eating and drinking

## **What happens next**

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to developing effective partnerships with parents and the wider community to support pupils' learning and raise their aspirations, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

## Main evaluation

### Learning

During their time at Bryn Celyn Primary School, most pupils, including the vulnerable, those with additional learning needs or English as an additional language, make strong progress in their learning from their starting points. Following the disruption of the pandemic, and the challenges that pupils and the community have faced, the acceleration in pupils' progress, since September 2021, is exceptionally good.

When pupils start school, many have poor speech and communication skills. Their personal and social skills are well below those expected for their age. Due to high-quality nursery provision, the relationships staff develop with pupils and their understanding of pupils' individual needs, they settle into school routines quickly and make swift progress in developing their well-being and learning.

Most nursery pupils make eye contact, listen to adults' instructions and gain the confidence to talk during their play. By reception, most pupils listen to each other well and take turns to speak. They are keen to show and talk about what they are doing. From Year 2 onwards, they listen well to each other's views, for instance about whether they would like to be king or queen based on the royal duties they have read about in their topic on the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. As pupils move through the school, they build their confidence to speak in front of an audience and structure their talk appropriately. For instance, Year 6 pupils adopt the role of a logger, tourist, tribe member or owner of a palm oil company successfully during a class debate about the destruction of the world's rainforests.

Despite reduced opportunities to hear and speak Welsh during the pandemic, pupils' listening and speaking skills are developing very well. They show enthusiasm for language learning and often initiate conversations with staff and visitors in Welsh during lessons and in less structured parts of the school day. By revisiting language patterns regularly, pupils develop the confidence to have a go. For instance, pupils in Year 3, use the past tense to describe visits to places of interest in Wales, and develop their vocabulary successfully.

Pupils in nursery and reception soon develop an interest in reading, choosing books to share with adults where they enjoy retelling stories. Reception pupils love playing games in the outdoors that help them to develop their knowledge of initial sounds and blends. As they progress through the school, many older pupils read with appropriate accuracy, expression and understanding, using a range of strategies to tackle unfamiliar words. By Year 6, many pupils read fluently and infer successfully from a text, for example explaining why an author uses particular words to convey a character's motive or mood. Most use question prompts well to hone their research skills. They skim and scan efficiently for information on websites, recognise why they should note down the sources they use and understand the importance of checking the reliability of the information they find.

Many young pupils show enthusiasm for writing when experimenting with mark making. Year 1 pupils apply their knowledge of sounds well when they attempt to spell new words during simple writing tasks. By Year 2, they begin to identify the

features of different genres and use these in their own writing. In general, older pupils develop a good understanding of the characteristics of different forms of writing and produce extended writing for a wide range of purposes. Although they plan, draft and improve their writing well in response to feedback from other pupils or their teacher, currently, many rely on the use of frameworks to help them develop the content and structure of their writing. They do not always use a varied enough vocabulary or the more formal language appropriate for the written form.

Younger pupils develop a sound understanding of number, shape and data through practical numeracy activities. By Year 1, nearly all pupils count on in twos, fives and tens and recognise two-dimensional shapes. Pupils in Year 2 tell the time to 15 minutes and use a thermometer to measure temperature, developing their understanding of negative numbers in this context. Across the school, pupils make strong progress in developing their problem-solving and reasoning skills. In Year 6, pupils collaborate successfully, applying their mathematical skills, to solve complex problems in a team linked to their topic work. For example, they use the four rules of number competently, apply their knowledge of factors, multiples and prime numbers, as well as using algebra to identify the 'n' value when working out the combination to padlocks that hold the Queen's jewels in the Tower of London vault.

During lockdown, teachers adopted a range of technologies well to support pupils' home learning. Pupils now apply their digital skills very competently in a range of creative contexts to support their learning. Most use their digital skills very well to support independent research and many present their findings through sophisticated multimedia presentations. They develop their creative skills by considering how best to achieve visual impact through their work. By Year 6, most pupils create and use databases and spreadsheets successfully, such as using formulae to work out the costs of planning a Jubilee party for parents and identifying which supermarkets offer the best value for money.

Through the regular opportunities provided for outdoor learning, younger pupils enjoy using tricycles to develop their physical skills and they balance well as they find a way to cross a wooden bridge safely. Nursery pupils use rolling pins to make play dough pancakes and other small tools to create patterns with improving control. However, as a result of time away from school during the pandemic, a minority of pupils in Years 3 to 6 have not yet developed their fine motor skills sufficiently and this hampers their ability to develop a fluent style of handwriting.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure at school. They have adapted very well to school life since September 2021, following the considerable disruption to their learning caused by the pandemic. Most pupils come to school keen to learn and engage enthusiastically in their lessons. Overall, pupils' behaviour is very good. They show a high level of respect for their peers and adults working in the school. Most are happy and confident to engage in conversations about their learning. They interact well with each other and are proud to talk to visitors about their achievements and how the school helps them to succeed.

As they progress through the school, most pupils develop the attitudes and behaviours that help them to become successful independent learners. Most are

resilient and have a determination to do their best. They draw successfully upon a range of strategies to overcome challenges. For example, when working on an activity that seems too difficult, they try a different way of approaching the problem and frequently support one another well to find a solution. Year 6 pupils, for instance, help each other to interpret an instruction manual, so they can write code to present information and images online. Older pupils often make improvements to their work during lessons and have a clear understanding of their next steps in learning. This helps them to make consistently good progress.

Across the school, pupils learn about the importance of citizenship and make valued contributions to their community. For instance, they create artwork on a range of themes for display along a local housing development site. Most older pupils develop strong entrepreneurial skills. They plan, make or source products to sell in the annual school fair and then collaborate effectively to decide how best to spend the profits to benefit their class.

Many pupils play an active role in the life and work of the school. They know that leaders and staff will listen to their views and make changes to improve their education and well-being. For example, on pupils' behalf, the school council was successful in adapting the learning modules they study as part of the 'Bryn Celyn Academy', a programme that is designed to enhance their learning experiences. Staff adapted the modules to include workshop activities that pupils felt better met their interests, such as clay modelling and gardening.

Most pupils have a good understanding of children's rights. They learn about the history of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and reflect thoughtfully on why there is a need for rights and rules in school and in wider society. Through meeting the Children's Commissioner for Wales, older pupils have been keen to learn more about human rights. In response to the war in Ukraine, Year 5 pupils wrote to their peers in Ysgol Gynradd Pen-Y-Groes, to ask if they would join them in raising money for Ukrainian refugees. As a result of their engagement with global events and issues, many pupils show determination to make the most of the opportunities they have at Bryn Celyn.

Many pupils take part in regular fitness activities and after-school clubs, such as baseball, that are available to younger and older pupils. They enjoy participating in the Cardiff schools' sports competition and dancing in front of a live audience at St David's Hall. Pupils enjoy making healthy foods in the cookery club but too often, they bring unhealthy drinks and snacks to school. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online and older pupils recognise how social media might adversely affect their mental well-being.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors, will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

The school has worked closely with parents to create a vision for a curriculum that is engaging, challenging and accessible to all pupils. The curriculum reflects the



school's diverse community and celebrates keenly the rich culture and heritage of its pupils and families, as well as developing pupils' sense of place and identity in Cardiff and Wales. Pupils learn about the history of Cardiff Bay, national heritage sites and the physical geography of Wales, as well as the artists who paint it, for example by exploring the work of Kyffin Williams.

The school provides excellent opportunities for pupils to learn about careers and the world of work, as part of their curriculum topics. They find out about the qualifications needed to do certain jobs, as well as the skills and attributes to be successful. This helps them to understand how their learning experiences will help them in their future lives. Staff ensure the curriculum is responsive to pupils' needs and reflects their interests. They plan a wide range of interesting contexts for learning, drawing on pupils' thoughts and ideas, often responding to local and global issues.

An outstanding feature of the school's work is the provision for developing pupils' listening and speaking skills in English and Welsh. Staff are effective language role models, and this helps pupils to become confident and respectful speakers, who are keen to develop and use new vocabulary in both languages. A useful overview of skills progression for languages, literacy and communication helps teachers to build pupils' skills and understanding systematically and coherently. There are many exciting opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and digital skills in authentic contexts across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 3 use pie charts to examine the different ways we have used energy in Britain since 1950, as part of their topical investigation into the current increase in the cost of living. The school has a clear way forward for the mapping of skills and knowledge across the other areas of learning and experience, though this is at an early stage of development.

The relationship between staff and pupils is exemplary. This has a positive impact on the learning environment, which is welcoming, calm and highly productive. Adults know their pupils well and, on the rare occasions when needed, manage their behaviour very successfully. Pupils benefit from effective teaching across the school with knowledgeable staff delivering exciting lessons at an appropriate pace. In nearly all cases, there is a clear focus for pupils' learning. In many classes, pupils work busily on stimulating tasks, including in the outdoors, where the youngest pupils have many opportunities to develop their physical and creative skills well. For example, pupils in the reception class collect natural items in the forest school to create a special crown for the Queen for her Platinum Jubilee. Lessons reflect the school's vision and aims to equip pupils with knowledge and skills for life. For example, pupils learn to read and understand the information on food labels, considering whether items are suitable for a healthy lifestyle. However, they do not always apply this knowledge to make healthy choices when eating and drinking.

All staff have high expectations for every pupil's learning and most provide appropriately challenging activities. For example, more able pupils in Year 6 use their digital skills to create scatter graphs as part of their science investigations, identifying the line of best fit to show a positive correlation between the circumference of a balloon and its oxygen capacity. When pupils need extra help, they benefit from learning assistants' high-quality support. Teachers use effective questioning to assess pupils' understanding and move their learning on. They review pupils' work carefully and provide prompt and useful feedback to help them to improve. This

assessment, as well as other observations of pupils' learning, informs the next steps in teachers' planning. They build up an accurate picture of each pupil's progress and monitor this robustly.

### **Care, support and guidance**

The quality of care, support and guidance for pupils and their families is outstanding. Staff have detailed knowledge of each pupil's personal qualities, needs and circumstances. The school provides highly effective support for the emotional, health and social needs of its pupils, particularly those with very low self-esteem. It provides short, enjoyable intervention activities that build pupils' confidence and strengthen their resilience so that they can engage successfully in all aspects of school life and cope with challenges they may face at home. Staff have expectations for pupils' behaviour across the school and are consistent in their approach to managing this. Each class develops a set of agreed rules and responsibilities and pupils use these to support them to make good decisions.

The school has effective strategies to identify and meet pupils' additional learning needs. The additional learning needs co-ordinator and staff work closely with pupils and their parents to identify precise learning targets and match learning programmes carefully to pupils' individual needs. They set clear criteria, which enable them to monitor pupils' learning carefully. They keep teaching approaches under review to ensure that pupils make rapid progress. Through well-focused sessions, most pupils develop the skills they need to work successfully without additional support during whole-class lessons.

The school works very effectively with external agencies and local partners to support pupils and their families. For example, in partnership with Cardiff and the Vale College, it offers a range of programmes that help parents to support their children's literacy and numeracy skills, as well as aspects of their well-being. This also provides parents with a route to other learning courses and opportunities for them to develop their own skills and knowledge.

Staff provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to contribute to the school and its wider community through the range of pupil voice groups. For example, the school council and Criw Cymraeg hold a coffee morning to raise money for a cancer charity, while promoting the Welsh language. Similarly, the school council and pupil attendance representatives explain to all classes why attending school regularly is so important. Leaders and staff work effectively with pupils to encourage them to take responsibility for their own attendance. For example, pupils track this on termly attendance cards to monitor their own progress towards class and whole-school targets.

There are strong arrangements to support pupils' social, moral and cultural development. As part of curriculum planning, staff often provide opportunities for pupils to influence what and how they learn. For example, older pupils research in detail the effects of deforestation on the rainforest, considering the perspectives of a variety of people who live there or who rely on the rainforest for their livelihoods. Staff challenge pupils to reflect on the moral dilemma of whose needs are the greatest and why. This also prompts pupils to consider how their own actions, such as buying goods that contain palm oil, might impact at a global level. In addition, a valuable link between an African school and Bryn Celyn, has helped pupils to consider the

similarities and differences between their cultures, to challenge stereotypes about people's lives and to empathise with their experiences.

Staff use the school's 'values tree', developed by pupils, to promote inclusion and foster shared values effectively. During collective worship, they listen to Bible stories that teach them about friendship, and they learn about festivals, such as Diwali, Eid and Chinese New Year. Older pupils explore the spiritual and ethical beliefs of Lutherans, Sikhs, Muslims and Jews as part of their work on the city of Cardiff, its heritage and culture. They consider how society should promote racial harmony and, as a result, many pupils express strong views in support of racial equality and respect for the principles of others. There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Pupils and parents report that incidents of bullying are extremely rare.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to take part in recreational and sports activities, to visit places of cultural significance in Wales and to participate in the arts. These experiences help to develop their confidence and self-esteem successfully. Older pupils benefit greatly from learning about careers and the world of work, for example through 'open your eyes' weeks. They speak to visitors from a range of industries and explore different professions. As a result, many older pupils have a clear understanding of the direction they want to take in their lives and talk with determination about persevering in school to achieve their ambitions.

### **Leadership and management**

Senior leaders and governors provide clear strategic direction for the development of the school. They work very effectively with parents, pupils and staff to establish the school's vision of raising aspirations for pupils, while providing them with the skills they need to be successful in their adult lives. Leaders, staff and governors have a strong understanding of the needs of the pupils and the local community. They work conscientiously to meet these needs, with the firm belief that economic disadvantage will not be a barrier to pupils receiving a high-quality education. Together, they ensure there is a strong safeguarding culture at the school.

The headteacher provides effective and dedicated leadership. She has high expectations of herself and for every member of staff to be committed to ensuring the well-being and progress of all pupils. Leaders have been highly successful in establishing a team ethos and this has contributed strongly to improving many important aspects of the school's work. Staff carry out their roles effectively and they support one another to improve their practice, through peer mentoring and sharing what works well.

The school's partnership with parents and carers is exemplary. Parents believe that leaders act in the best interests of their children, ensuring they are safe, happy and learning well. The school provides a welcoming community space where parents have opportunities to attend workshops that help them to understand how they can support their children's learning. It also offers a range of family learning programmes, along with weekly 'drop-in' digital sessions. During these sessions, staff help parents to learn new skills. They support them to complete job applications and to fill in online forms that secure places for their children to attend the nursery class and secondary school. This has been particularly helpful for parents with English as an additional language. In return for spending time with staff to support their children's learning,

the school provides free social events for these pupils, such as film nights and discos. This helps to develop positive relationships within the school community.

In response to national priorities, such as the introduction of a Curriculum for Wales, the school works effectively with its cluster to develop approaches to teaching and learning that provide continuity for pupils, as they move to secondary school. Year group teams of teachers and support staff collaborate well to plan learning experiences that develop pupils' skills progressively. Leaders ensure that staff can access a wide range of professional learning opportunities. This includes being able to carry out action research to better meet the needs of groups of pupils in their classes, as well as contributing to whole-school priorities, such as developing pupils' oracy skills.

The school has a strong track record of using external feedback effectively to implement and sustain improvement. Leaders know the school well. They identify accurately nearly all strengths and weaknesses, including where there is variation in the quality of teaching. They tailor support to individual staff appropriately, helping them to improve. Arrangements to monitor and evaluate the school's work are well embedded, with leaders, governors and staff gathering a wide range of first-hand evidence of the quality of provision. Governors are very involved in the life of the school and fulfil the role of critical friend well. One of the strengths of the school's approach, is the pairing of governors with cohorts of pupils. They follow the pupils as they move through the school, listening to them read, talking to them about their learning and discussing their progress with staff. This enables them to provide a high level of challenge about the level of progress individual pupils make, including how well they benefit from the pupil development grant. Overall, leaders and governors use the findings of self-evaluation well to identify relevant priorities. However, governors do not ensure that arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking are effective enough.

Governors monitor the budget closely and support leaders to manage and use resources effectively to drive improvement. There is strong cooperation between leaders in Bryn Celyn and Ysgol Gynradd Pen-Y-Groes to share resources, such as the hall, and to manage the shared site 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](http://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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**This document has been translated by Trosol (English to Welsh).**