



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

A report on

St Athan Primary School

**Rock Road
St Athan
Barry
Vale of Glamorgan
CF62 4PG**

Date of inspection: October 2024

by

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

About St Athan Primary School

Name of provider	St Athan Primary School
Local authority	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	201
Pupils of statutory school age	149
Number in nursery classes	24
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 22.9%)	25.2%
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 11.1%)	6.0%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	6.1%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2011
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/10/2016
Start date of inspection	21/10/2024

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.

Summary

At St Athan Primary School, staff create a nurturing and supportive environment where pupils feel a sense of belonging. The school's senior leaders have a clear vision for an inclusive school with a strong sense of community in which all pupils are happy, engaged and develop a love of learning.

Staff support pupils' moral and social development well. As a result, most pupils work alongside each other in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation well. Leaders have ensured that the extensive space within the school is used appropriately to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable pupils. For example, sensory spaces like the indoor woodland or the developing lunchtime café area support pupils to be calm and ready for learning.

Leaders and staff have worked well together to develop the school's curriculum. They have carefully considered the skills and experiences that will support pupils to make progress in their learning. However, the quality of teaching across the school is variable and staff do not always use the learning environment purposefully to enhance learning. As a result, a few pupils do not always make the progress they should.

The school's provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is strong. Staff put pupils at the centre of their work, and skilled teaching assistants support pupils' needs effectively, enabling most pupils to make good progress towards their personal targets.

Leaders generally evaluate the school's strengths and areas for improvement well. They generally use this information effectively to develop aspects of the school's work, such as improving pupils' skills in and reading and writing. However, leaders do not always focus improvement carefully enough on important aspects that need improving.

Recommendations

We have made one recommendation to help the school continue to improve:

R1 Address the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Leaders have created a welcoming and happy community in which pupils and staff feel valued and cared for, and have a sense of pride in their school. Senior leaders develop staff effectively, enabling them to take on leadership roles and upskilling staff suitably to carry out their roles. The school's culture of learning ensures that many pupils, including those with additional needs (ALN), make good progress in their learning and behave well.

Overall, learning experiences are engaging and teaching is generally effective. Leaders and staff have thoughtfully developed an authentic curriculum that supports pupils to develop a wide range of knowledge and skills. Most teachers use a range of helpful teaching approaches that maintain pupils' interest well. As a result, most pupils show a keen interest in their learning. They enjoy working in pairs and groups, listen attentively to each other and problem solve successfully. The school has suitable arrangements to monitor pupils' progress over time and teachers use a wide range of information to help them plan the next steps in pupils' learning.

Many staff provide valuable opportunities for younger pupils to learn through practical experiences that enable them to make choices about their learning and develop their creativity appropriately. In many of the foundation learning classes, teachers provide a range of play and exploration experiences focusing appropriately on developing pupils' physical and social skills, alongside early literacy and numeracy skills. The youngest pupils are curious and enjoy exploring when learning outside. However, staff do not always create effective learning environments that support pupils to develop as independent learners.

Where teaching is most effective, teachers adapt their approaches to meet pupils' needs and encourage them to reflect successfully on their learning. In many cases teachers have suitable expectations for pupils' learning and share these effectively with pupils. In a few lessons, teachers challenge and extend pupils' skills, for example when enabling pupils in Year 6 to give thoughtful answers to questions about the impact of the move to London on the Windrush generation. However, in a few lessons, staff do not challenge pupils suitably to make the progress they could.

Teachers plan to develop pupils' languages and communication skills effectively. Pupils build on these skills and, by the time they leave the school, maturely demonstrate their discussion and debating skills when considering moral and ethical questions. Most pupils make good progress in developing their digital skills and their mathematical knowledge and understanding. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching mean that a minority of pupils do not always apply their literacy, numeracy and digital skills at the same level in their work across the curriculum.

Many pupils develop their Welsh language skills suitably as they move through the school. Younger pupils use simple vocabulary such as colours and numbers and a few ask simple questions in basic conversations. Older pupils ask and answer questions about where they live, their family and the local area appropriately.

The school develops pupils' cultural awareness and values well. Older pupils demonstrate their empathy when designing information packs for refugees and

improve their knowledge of the people that have shaped modern Wales when learning about the lives of Welsh artists and musicians. Pupils benefit from opportunities to understand and reflect on a variety of faiths and beliefs. For example, pupils reflect on Bible stories to develop their own appreciation of sharing, cooperation and kindness.

The school provides pupils with valuable opportunities to develop a range of skills in the outdoors. In 'Plantasia', the school's garden, pupils grow fruit and vegetables and then sell their produce in the school fayre. In addition, pupils benefit from the school's 'Woodland Wonders' where they build campfires and learn about the woodland habitat. However, teachers do not generally use the outdoors suitably to challenge all pupils at a high enough level.

Leaders and governors ensure that the school's resources are managed well. They use grant funding appropriately to improve outcomes for pupils who need additional support, including those whose parents are in the military.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for site security do not give any cause for concern.

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

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

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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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

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