



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

A report on

Blaenymaes Primary School

**Broughton Avenue
Blaenymaes
SA5 5LW**

Date of inspection: November 2024

by

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

About Blaenymaes Primary School

Name of provider	Blaenymaes Primary School
Local authority	City and County of Swansea
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	215
Pupils of statutory school age	159
Number in nursery classes	34
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%)	68.3%
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%)	21.4%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	13.2%
Date of headteacher appointment	28/06/2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	20/11/2016
Start date of inspection	18/11/2024

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

The headteacher and staff at Blaenymaes provide a warm, welcoming school environment where pupils feel safe and cared for. Teachers across the school successfully promote the rights of the child and this influences the school curriculum and pupils' attitudes to school life and learning positively. As a result, nearly all pupils behave well throughout the school day and demonstrate a strong sense of equity and fairness.

Across the school, teachers provide a range of worthwhile interventions to support the emotional and well-being needs of pupils. Leaders use assessment information suitably to identify pupils with additional learning needs and those who need a little extra help with their learning. However, overall, teachers' use of ongoing assessments to tailor lessons to meet the needs of all pupils varies across the school.

Many pupils make suitable progress from their individual starting points. Most younger pupils develop their reading skills well and many older pupils read for pleasure, developing their accuracy and fluency as they progress through the school. However, overall, pupils' oracy and writing skills are less well developed. Teachers do not always support pupils to make connections between different aspects of their learning. For example, they do not routinely use their knowledge of letter sounds to help them to spell words correctly.

Many pupils make suitable progress in mathematics and use these skills appropriately across the curriculum. Through a topic based approach they develop their digital skills effectively. However, the independent learning tasks provided by teachers do not always challenge pupils well enough or support them to build their skills progressively as they move through the school.

Leaders use effective systems to identify the school's strengths and areas for development. They provide valuable learning opportunities for staff to work with other schools and organisations, and this helps to develop staff knowledge and skills. Overall, improvement planning is effective.

The headteacher is dedicated to developing a team ethos, where staff, pupils and their families feel respected and valued. Governors provide valuable support and fulfil their statutory requirements. They help manage the school finances effectively and work hard to mitigate the impact of poverty on families. For example, through grant funding and links with other organisations, leaders provide valuable activities, on and off site. These help to broaden pupils' experiences. Partnership working with families and the community is a strength of the school.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Improve pupils' oracy and writing skills
- R2 Improve the use of ongoing assessments to ensure that teaching meet the needs of all pupils
- R3 Develop the curriculum to provide purposeful independent learning activities that challenge pupils and enable them to develop and apply a range of skills progressively across the curriculum

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Leaders and staff at Blaenymaes Primary are committed to providing a caring, nurturing environment for pupils and their families. Teachers and support staff know their pupils and families well. They develop positive relationships that help to ensure that pupils have a sense of belonging and pride in their school.

Teachers consider the interests of pupils when planning activities and use this to engage and motivate them. The school's curriculum makes good use of the locality and community resources and this helps broaden learning opportunities for pupils. For example, leaders at the school liaise with the Gower Tae Can project and local community farm to provide opportunities for pupils to plant vegetables that they harvest and use to make soup. Parents are invited into school to taste the soup and learn about how they can make healthy, affordable meals at home. These activities help create a purposeful curriculum and valuable connections between family and school life.

Overall, teachers' expectations for pupils' learning are appropriate. Most teachers are developing an understanding of progression across all areas of learning and are beginning to use this information to support curriculum design. In the best examples, they support and challenge pupils effectively, for example through the use of questioning. However, planned independent learning tasks do not always support or challenge pupils to use or develop their skills well enough. These activities tend to keep pupils busy but do not make a notable difference to pupils' learning and progress.

Leaders use assessment information appropriately to track the progress pupils make and to make decisions about those who may benefit from a range of intervention

programmes. These interventions provide valuable support to those pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and social and emotional needs. However, teachers do not always use day-to-day assessments and observations of learning well enough to plan lessons that both challenge and support pupils at the right level.

Across the school, many pupils, including those from socio economically disadvantaged contexts and those with ALN, make suitable progress over time. When they first start school, most pupils' generally have limited speaking and listening skills. During their time in school, they do not develop these or their writing skills as well as they could. Pupils have opportunities to write for a range of purposes but they do not always make connections with their learning. For example, a minority of younger pupils do not use their knowledge of letter sounds well enough to spell words correctly and a minority of older pupils repeat spelling and grammatical errors on too many occasions. Over time, many pupils make suitable progress in reading. The school successfully promotes reading to develop pupils' interest and joy in books. For example, many pupils enjoy accessing the reading café to share books and to talk about their favourite authors and stories. Many younger pupils develop their understanding that letters make sounds to build words and, by the time they reach Year 6, many older pupils read with increasing accuracy and fluency.

Provision for the development of pupils' Welsh language skills is effective. There are good opportunities for pupils to use their Welsh in class and during break-times. Older pupils enjoy leading Welsh language assemblies and this helps to promote the language as well as Welsh culture.

The school provides a structured approach to the teaching of mathematics and numeracy. Many pupils have worthwhile opportunities to reflect on their learning before each unit of study and this helps to identify the progress they have made and areas to improve on. Many of the youngest pupils count items to 10 reliably and most older pupils use their knowledge of number to solve problems independently, exploring patterns, checking their answers and explaining their calculation methods. Older pupils use their mathematical skills effectively in real-life contexts, for example when using measurements to calculate the height of structures required to make a marble run. Most pupils make suitable progress over time.

Many teachers provide a suitable range of interesting opportunities for pupils to develop their digital skills. For example, younger pupils use commands to move a mechanical toy and older pupils use spreadsheets, create databases and animations linked to their topic work. There are a range of valuable experiences for pupils, to develop their creative skills, including drama workshops, celebratory performances and working with local artists. When developing their physical skills, most pupils engage in the school's daily mile and older pupils enjoy participating in team sports.

Leaders provide important opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of their rights. This is an important feature of the school. It successfully enables pupils to develop empathy, tolerance and appreciation towards others. For example, older pupils learn about the Welsh boxer Cuthbert Taylor and show empathy when exploring the theme of racism. Many pupils develop their understanding of the diverse nature of families and the experiences of LGBTQ+ people through real-life stories that are structured in the curriculum.

Leaders are beginning to develop a bespoke curriculum that aligns with the ethos and expectations set out in Curriculum for Wales and recognises the diverse nature of the local community. The curriculum is based on the fifty experiences Blaenymaes Primary pupils should access and this helps ensure that there is a breadth of knowledge and learning experiences for all. Leaders make effective use of the Pupil Development Grant to ensure that there is equity of provision and opportunities for all pupils.

Governors work closely with the headteacher to manage the school's finances effectively. There are many important opportunities for governors to work with school staff, to engage in learning walks and talk to pupils about their work. This helps to ensure that governors are informed about pupils' progress. Governors understand their role and provide an appropriate level of challenge and support to leaders.

There are effective systems in place to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the school. Leaders and staff work together to reflect on the school's strengths and areas to develop. They draw on a range of first-hand evidence to support their judgments. Leaders work with advisers and partner schools to evaluate the school's work and use this information to prioritise the areas most in need of improvement. They align their monitoring cycle and professional development with improvement planning and regularly review the progress made against priorities. In the most effective and successful examples, improvement planning clearly identifies what teachers need to do to bring about change and to improve standards in teaching and learning. For example, leaders demonstrate effective school improvement processes when developing pupils' digital and reading skills. However, in a few examples, it is not always clear what actions are needed to raise standards in the quality of teaching, especially when developing pupils' oracy skills.

There are robust procedures to monitor pupils' attendance. Rates of attendance, including for pupils who are eligible for free school meals, are improving. However, the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals remains notably lower than that of their peers. Leaders participate in valuable research work with other schools and the local university. This helps the school to develop successful initiatives that are beginning to impact positively on rates of attendance.

Spotlight: Partnership working

The headteacher has a clear understanding of the needs of the school and its community and successfully creates a strong team ethos where everyone works together to enhance the learning opportunities and life chances for pupils and their families. Leaders work exceptionally well with partnership agencies to offer valuable support to families. Regular family festival days involve external agencies who offer advice and support for families, including housing support, advice from mental health services, access to the local food bank and affordable food from the community Drop-In Centre. In addition to this, links with the Swans football group and local university successfully enhance pupils' experiences and help to raise aspirations. This is further enhanced when past pupils visit the school to talk about their education pathway and successes.

Additional information

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

The school's arrangements for site management 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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