



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

A report on

Awel Y Môr Primary

**Severn Crescent
Sandfields
Port Talbot
SA12 6TP**

Date of inspection: July 2024

by

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

About Awel Y Môr Primary

Name of provider	Awel Y Môr Primary
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	368
Pupils of statutory school age	323
Number in nursery classes	45
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%)	61.4%
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%)	17%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	3.3%
Date of headteacher appointment	04/09/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	20/06/2016
Start date of inspection	01/07/2024

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

The headteacher at Awel Y Mor provides strong, considerate leadership and knows the school well. He is ably supported by dedicated staff, who together form an effective team. The school, including the Pupil Inclusion Centre (PIC), is an inclusive, welcoming, and happy learning community, which promotes well-being effectively.

The headteacher works diligently with staff and governors to plan school improvement. However, monitoring and evaluation processes do not always focus well enough on the most important areas for improvement such as the quality of teaching.

Leaders and staff know pupils well and use this information to ensure that all pupils are well cared for. Pupils are secure in their relationships with staff and, as a result, their behaviour is good. Pupils and their families have a strong sense of pride in their school and nearly all pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Leaders and staff keep in close contact with the wider school community and build positive relationships with parents.

The school's curriculum takes account of pupils' interests. Staff offer pupils a variety of learning experiences, which help keep pupils engaged in their learning. As a result, most pupils including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those in the PIC, engage well with their learning, make strong progress and achieve well. Teachers support pupils to build on their learning suitably. They ask appropriate questions in class to check pupils' understanding and to move learning forward. However, teachers sometimes over-direct learning and this hinders pupils' independence, including knowing how to improve their own work. Teachers plan purposeful opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. However, pupils' Welsh language skills are less well developed.

Provision for outdoor learning experiences is effective and focuses on improving pupils' skills through a range of stimulating learning activities.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen leadership and focus self-evaluation, monitoring and improvement planning on the areas most in need of improvement
- R2 Address the inconsistencies in teaching
- R3 Strengthen the provision for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils start school with skills below those expected for their age. As they move through school, most pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, make strong progress from their starting points. Nearly all pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), including those in the Pupil Inclusion Centre (PIC), make strong progress towards their individual targets.

Most younger pupils develop their speaking and listening skills well. They talk with staff and visitors confidently about their learning. Most older pupils make sound progress in developing their oracy skills. They confidently offer their opinions and listen well to each other's viewpoints during presentations and debates.

The youngest pupils enjoy listening to stories and handling the books available in the classroom. Most develop a good understanding of how letters make words as they begin to read simple texts. As they progress through the school, a majority of pupils make good progress in developing their reading skills. Older pupils develop a range of effective strategies to become increasingly independent readers. They show a suitable understanding of the structure of texts, and many read with suitable expression, using punctuation appropriately to convey the meaning of what they read clearly. By Year 6, most read a suitable variety of challenging texts online confidently.

Across the school, most pupils make sound progress in developing their writing skills. The youngest pupils develop from early mark making to writing simple words accurately. By Year 2, many pupils write simple sentences using basic punctuation independently, for example when writing invitations to a party. Most older pupils choose language appropriately and adapt their writing successfully when writing in a range of genres. For example, they write a persuasive letter to Vaughan Gethin expressing their concerns confidently about the pollution in the sea nearby. Overall, pupils apply their writing skills purposefully in other areas of their learning. However, pupils do not always take enough pride in the presentation of their work.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their mathematical knowledge and understanding. The youngest pupils begin to recognise numbers and count to 10 confidently. Most younger pupils develop a good understanding of number and confidently recall multiples of 2, 5 and 10 to solve mathematical problems. Older pupils begin to deepen their understanding exploring different methods of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They use their numeracy skills well in purposeful contexts, for example, analysing data charts to work out which party might win the forthcoming election.

Many of the youngest pupils have positive attitudes to learning Welsh. Younger pupils follow instructions in Welsh as part of their daily routine. By Year 2 many pupils use greetings and ask simple questions when playing games. Older pupils answer simple questions with basic responses during discussions with teachers, for example when discussing the weather. However, they do not make strong enough progress in developing their Welsh language skills.

Most pupils develop their digital skills effectively and use them suitably to support their learning across the curriculum. Younger pupils use a variety of digital programs well, for example, to create a branching database on animals. They upload their work confidently onto a digital platform. Older pupils use a wide range of digital programs effectively. For example, they create interactive presentations and use spreadsheets to capture and interrogate data about Formula 1 cars.

Nearly all pupils develop their physical skills well. The youngest pupils confidently ride bikes, demonstrating good control when navigating a route set out in the yard. Older pupils apply themselves enthusiastically in physical exercise, swimming lessons, and play football and netball together successfully in local competitions.

Across the school, most pupils develop their creative skills successfully. The youngest pupils develop a good range of techniques through a wide range of creative activities such as painting, poetry and role play. Older pupils develop their skills using a variety of media in art lessons to create clay sculptures and chalk to create observational drawings using real life stimuli as part of their work on Cynefin.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils at Awel Y Mor, including those in the PIC, feel happy and safe. They are confident that staff will listen to them, and this contributes successfully to their well-being. They talk enthusiastically about their school and with great pride. Pupils are friendly, respectful and caring towards their peers and, across the whole school, pupils work and play together happily.

Nearly all pupils have a clear understanding of the school's values the school promotes and understand that these contribute to their development as responsible citizens. For example, they understand why is important to be kind and treat adults and pupils with respect.

Most pupils across the school have positive attitudes to learning. They participate enthusiastically in lessons and are beginning to focus well when working independently. As they progress through the school, many pupils increasingly develop their independence as they engage in learning experiences and when they face any difficulty in their activities, follow the procedure of discussing and working with their peers before asking an adult for support. They listen attentively to their teachers and each other, and generally complete their tasks with confidence and enthusiasm. Most older pupils settle quickly to tasks and concentrate for extended periods, contributing enthusiastically to class and group discussions.

As they move through the school, most pupils respond well to questions during lessons. They value feedback from staff and use this to move their learning forward. In the younger classes, pupils are beginning to reflect well on their own work and the work of others. For example, Year 2 pupils check each other's sentence starters and talk sensibly about ways they could improve their sentences. Older pupils are beginning to assess each other's work. However, on occasion, pupils are over-reliant on adult direction and teachers do not provide feedback that helps them improve their work independently.

Many pupils, including those with ALN and those eligible for free school meals, take on leadership roles with pride and passion. They undertake their roles diligently to influence the life and work of the school. They work closely with staff to introduce new initiatives such as pupil reflection time. This enables pupils to share any concerns they have in the knowledge that they will be supported with care and compassion.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of equality and demonstrate respect for others. For example, older pupils discuss children's rights meaningfully. Older pupils understand that across the world some, such as LGBTQ+ people, do not have their human rights met. They begin to advocate for others' rights.

They are aware of the importance of sustainability and are considerate of the impact that people have on the environment. Older pupils discuss how to improve facilities at their local park in order to make the resource more sustainable. They are keen to raise money for their school in order to develop a sensory garden and replace play equipment.

During their time at Awel Y Mor Primary School, most pupils develop a good understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and lifestyle. They embrace the opportunities they have to develop their physical skills through the many experiences the school provides. For example, younger pupils quickly learn how to work together when constructing an obstacle course. Older pupils continue to develop their confidence within PE lessons and pupils of all ages take part in a wide variety of beneficial local sporting activities and competitions, which helps them develop a team ethic.

Pupils have a good understanding of diversity. A number of pupils who have joined the school from other countries are welcomed into the community and encouraged to share their beliefs and cultures in lessons. For example, parents have been invited in to share traditional foods from their home country.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, staff have positive and caring working relationships with pupils. They provide good role models and have high expectations of behaviour and learning. Teaching assistants work alongside teachers skilfully and contribute purposefully to pupils' learning and well-being. The school's approach to securing pupils' well-being is a strength and this has a significant impact on pupils' attitudes to learning.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum which is underpinned by its strong values and ethos. Staff provide enriching experiences that build on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills. This ensures that most pupils make good progress in their learning. Staff know their pupils well and adjust teaching approaches to meet their individual needs. However, in a few classes, teachers do not always provide clear learning intentions and, as a result, pupils do not understand the purpose of their learning.

Leaders and staff have worked successfully to develop a curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils and the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales. They bring the

curriculum to life with visits and engaging learning experiences in school. Teachers plan purposeful learning activities in the school's woodland area to encourage team building and collaboration. Following a visit to the zoo, the pupils use their photographs to make pictures using natural materials in order to develop creative skills. In the youngest classes, staff provide opportunities for pupils to choose their own activities and access challenge areas independently. However, in some classes across the school, activities are over-directed, and pupils have limited opportunities to make choices about their learning.

Teachers plan successfully to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. For example, teachers use questioning effectively to encourage pupils to develop their oracy skills well. Teachers provide effective opportunities for the oldest pupils to use a character from a book to plot a line graph about the changes in the character's emotions as the story progresses.

Many teachers use basic Welsh vocabulary appropriately during lessons, for example to give instructions to pupils. They develop pupils' knowledge of Welsh vocabulary and enable them to practice sentence patterns. Generally, however, staff do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to make the most of opportunities to model the language or encourage the pupils to speak, ask and answer questions in Welsh outside formal Welsh sessions. As a result, pupils do not make suitable progress in developing their Welsh language skills.

Teachers plan purposefully for pupils to develop their digital skills in a range of contexts. Younger pupils confidently use a range of programs and upload their work to a digital platform. Older pupils create relevant presentations and use their coding skills to programme a device.

Leaders and staff ensure that the school's curriculum reflects the nature and context of the school and that learning experiences reflect the cultural, linguistic, and diverse nature of Wales and the wider world. The school provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to learn basic skills in a range of languages including British Sign Language, supporting them to develop their language skills.

Teachers evaluate pupils' progress effectively. They use a range of evidence well to help them identify pupils who need additional support quickly. Teachers provide feedback on pupils' written work outlining what pupils have done well. In a minority of classes, teachers ask appropriate questions to check for pupils' understanding or to encourage pupils to reflect on their learning. However, teachers do not always provide clear feedback to pupils that enables them to know how to improve their work.

Care, support and guidance

Leaders and staff know pupils well and meet their needs effectively. They create a reassuring and warm environment that contributes beneficially to pupils' contentment and underpins the good behaviour that is evident across the school. Staff make good use of facilities such as the rainbow room to help pupils regulate their emotions, and the woodland area, which helps promote pupils' physical and emotional well-being. Staff in the PIC support the social and emotional needs of pupils highly effectively.

The school's family ethos ensures that pupils are keen to attend, and this has had a positive influence on the school's attendance rate.

The school has robust systems to identify and track pupils with ALN. The school's additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) and the leader of the Pupil Inclusion Centre work effectively with staff and outside agencies to meet the individual needs of pupils with ALN successfully. Staff review individual pupils' progress regularly and meet with parents to develop a shared understanding of pupils' ongoing needs. This open and honest relationship between school and home enables school to provide effective targeted support. Learning Support Assistants run a well-planned series of focused interventions, for instance to strengthen pupils' communication, number, and social skills. They work skilfully with pupils to enable them to make progress and develop confidence. As a result, nearly all pupils with ALN make sound progress from their individual starting points.

The school's provision for developing pupils' spiritual, moral and ethical understanding is effective. Whole-school acts of collective worship and classroom activities encourage pupils to reflect on their own values and beliefs and how they might apply these to their daily lives.

The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to take on a variety of leadership roles. Staff support elected pupils to create their own development plans, contribute purposefully to decision-making and play an active role in improving their school and community. For example, the Community Team created a metal sculptured fish, filled with plastic bottles and other forms of pollution regularly found on the beach. They plan to display this sculpture on their nearby beach to encourage people to pick up their rubbish.

The school uses educational visits effectively to develop pupils' understanding and appreciation of Welsh identity, heritage and culture successfully. As part of their project, pupils, staff and parents visited the local promenade to speak to local residents and highlight the loss of jobs at the local steelworks. Pupils in Year 6 create a monthly podcast to celebrate school life. This ensures that pupils develop a sense of belonging to their local community. Team Ddraig promotes the Welsh language well at playtimes.

Staff provide a diverse range of visits that enhance the curriculum and engage all pupils actively in their learning. For example, younger pupils visit Manor Park as part of their topic on Habitats and pupils in Year 5 benefit from a residential trip to Llangrannog that allows them to build on their problem solving, and team building skills.

Staff provide a valuable range of after-school clubs, focusing on a range of interests that include art, sport and cooking and gardening. This provision helps pupils broaden their interests and widen their skills.

The school ensures that pupils learn about equality and diversity through the curriculum, and this enables pupils to empathise with the challenges faced by others. For example, Team Community members organise anti racism events to enhance pupils' understanding of diversity and making the right choices. As a result, pupils

develop an understanding of the positive impact their actions can have on the well-being of others.

The family liaison officer supports families beneficially. For example they ensure regular attendance and organise courses to enhance parents' skills in a variety of areas. Parents are extremely appreciative of this support and guidance.

The school has pupils' well-being and safety at its heart. There is a strong culture of safeguarding, and all staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities for keeping learners safe.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides effective and thoughtful leadership and is passionate about ensuring that pupil well-being is at the heart of the school's work. Together with staff, he has established a clear vision to support the learning and well-being of pupils and conveys this vision successfully to staff, parents, governors and pupils. Together, they create a happy, nurturing environment where pupils care for each other and work collaboratively. At its core is a thoughtful and inclusive culture that ensures that pupils feel a secure sense of belonging and develop the confidence and skills to engage positively in learning experiences. Leaders and staff have a thorough understanding of the needs of the pupils and the local community and work with commitment to meet these needs.

Across the school, dedicated staff model professional values and behaviours that contribute purposefully to effective collaboration and a strong team ethic. They create a welcoming, caring environment where pupils feel safe and valued.

Staff have worked creatively and purposefully to design a curriculum in response to curriculum reform. Staff ensure that pupils receive a broad and balanced range of learning experiences and draw well on specialist provision, visits and visitors to enhance the curriculum. Leaders have developed appropriate processes to evaluate the school's performance. However, they do not always identify important aspects in need of improvement, such as addressing inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Staff meet regularly to consider individual pupils' progress, ensuring that pupils who need support are identified quickly and suitable provision is put in place.

The school's arrangements to support staff development are effective. Staff reflect purposefully on their training and welcome the opportunity to share their experiences with colleagues. However, these experiences do not always impact on school improvement priorities or focus closely enough on pupils' outcomes. Leaders provide opportunities for staff to collaborate with local schools, for example to strengthen provision for the progression of integral skills.

The headteacher is developing staff as leaders and, in a few instances, leaders and staff make a notable difference to pupils' progress and school experiences. For example, leaders of ALN ensure that staff have a good understanding of their role in supporting pupils with ALN, and pupils with ALN make strong progress. Generally, however, leaders do not always have a clear enough impact on pupils' outcomes.

Governors are passionate and committed advocates of the school. They ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding and suitable arrangements for promoting pupils' healthy eating and drinking. The governing body receive valuable information from the headteacher about pupils' learning and the school's progress in relation to improvement priorities. However, at times they rely too heavily on this information to assure quality of teaching. They provide useful scrutiny and challenge to the work of leaders in many areas, for example on improving rates of attendance. They have detailed plans in place to use the pupil development grant wisely to ensuring a range of valuable support programmes to help the emotional and social development of vulnerable pupils. School leaders and governors manage their school budget well and careful financial planning ensures that the school has sufficient funds to deliver plans in the coming year.

Leaders have robust plans in place to remove any barriers to learning and well-being for pupils from low-income households. The school engages positively and effectively with parents. There are regular and valuable opportunities for parents to share in and support their child's learning journey, for example through regular digital communication, providing information detailing how they can support their child with their learning and organising curriculum events.

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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