



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

A report on

**Blaenhonddan Primary School
Main Road
Bryncoch
Neath
SA10 7PE**

Date of inspection: December 2017

by

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

About Blaenhonddan Primary School

Blaenhonddan Primary School is in Bryncoch in Neath Port Talbot local authority. There are 252 pupils including 43 who attend the nursery on a part-time basis. The school has a learning support centre for pupils with additional learning needs in key stage 2. The pupils in the centre are from outside the school's catchment area and are placed there by the local authority.

The rolling average of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is 5%, which is below the national average of 19%. The school identifies 17% of pupils having additional learning needs, a figure just under the national average of 21%. A very few pupils have statements of special educational needs. No pupils come from Welsh speaking homes. A very few pupils speak English as an additional language.

The school's last inspection was in July 2012. The headteacher took up her appointment in September 2015.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

Most pupils at Blaenhonddan Primary School make good progress from their starting points and develop their literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) and Welsh language skills well. Most pupils develop their personal and social skills to a high standard and show respect and concern for others. Pupils apply themselves to their learning very positively and enjoy the interesting lessons and good teaching they receive. Support for pupils with additional learning needs is good and most targeted pupils make appropriate progress in line with their abilities. The headteacher promotes a clear vision for the school and is providing strong leadership to an improving school. Governors support the school well and are developing their strategic role suitably. Self-evaluation procedures are effective in identifying strengths and areas for development. Findings feed into the school development plan and bring about improvement, for instance in foundation phase teaching and provision.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the performance of more able pupils
- R2 Raise the standard of pupils' writing in key stage 2
- R3 Improve attendance
- R4 Ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve their work
- R5 Provide opportunities for pupils to develop their creative music skills

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

Many pupils start school with literacy, numeracy, personal and social skills that are above those expected for their age. As they move through the school, most pupils make at least good progress. A minority makes progress at higher than the expected level.

Most pupils with additional learning needs make good progress from their starting points. Pupils in the learning support centre make appropriate progress in line with their abilities. For example, most of these pupils confidently count with accuracy up to 20 and a few pupils are beginning to spell simple words independently.

In the foundation phase, nearly all pupils make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. In nursery, they develop early confidence to speak and begin to extend their sentences to express themselves. Throughout the foundation phase, pupils listen attentively to adults and respond appropriately to questions. In Year 2, many discuss their work together effectively, for example when deciding how best to measure different items. Most pupils are enthusiastic about reading. They use their knowledge of sounds effectively to work out unfamiliar words. In Year 2, the more able pupils read well. They talk enthusiastically about characters and books they like. Most pupils in Year 2 write successfully for different purposes such as describing holidays or going on a mini-beast hunt. They use basic punctuation well to organise their work. Their spelling of common words is often correct and they learn to form letters and develop their handwriting effectively.

By the end of key stage 2, nearly all pupils speak confidently and clearly. They work well together and respect each other's views. For example, Year 5 pupils listen well when working in small groups and try different ideas when using models to make a film about Egyptian mummies. Most key stage 2 pupils have positive attitudes to reading and show a good understanding of what they read. In Year 6, most pupils discuss texts in detail by their favourite authors and identify themes and characters in books they are reading. Most pupils develop joined handwriting effectively by the end of the key stage. They use their writing skills well to choose expressive vocabulary to write poems and correctly explain terms such as personification or metaphor. They write lists of facts and instructions effectively, label charts and illustrations clearly and briefly describe scientific experiments. However, key stage 2 pupils do not produce extended pieces of written work often enough to develop punctuation skills well and organise their writing more fully. This limits their ability to explore and express their ideas in depth and for more able pupils to achieve at the higher than the expected level.

Most pupils develop their mathematical skills well. In reception, many identify two dimensional shapes correctly, naming a circle, square, triangle and rectangle. By Year 2, most pupils count effectively forwards and backwards and in multiples of two, five or ten. Many develop good mental skills based upon a sound understanding of place value and the relationships between numbers. Their understanding of measuring in centimetres and metres is well developed. More able pupils use coins correctly to create different sums within one pound.

By the end of key stage 2, most pupils apply suitable calculation strategies using the four rules of number to solve problems. They use their number skills effectively in science experiments when measuring distances, or weighing and timing different variables. They record their findings in tables and most interpret the results correctly. However, their use of graphs to convey information in different areas of the curriculum is limited mainly to simple bar charts.

Most pupils develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills well. As they move through the school most become competent at storing and accessing work on an electronic system. In the foundation phase, many use art applications suitably to create illustrations. In Year 2, most pupils create tally and bar graphs, for example using Welsh to show results about favourite foods. They use tablet computers to compose writing and to programme a figure to move in different directions. By the end of key stage 2 most pupils use word processing packages confidently to draft and present their work. Most research on the internet competently. Many use applications on tablet computers to present and display their findings using embedded images and sounds. A very few more able pupils have well developed coding skills. Many pupils use simple programmes to create graphs and present data. However, pupils' understanding of spreadsheets and databases is limited overall.

Most pupils enjoy learning Welsh in a range of subjects and develop their skills well. In the foundation phase, pupils respond appropriately to instructions and reply to simple greetings and instructions confidently. By the end of Year 2, most pupils read and write simple Welsh sentences correctly and have a reasonable understanding of what they have read. In key stage 2, most pupils develop a range of vocabulary through appropriate word banks and speak confidently. Many take part in role play sessions on the 'Hot Seat' effectively with appropriate pronunciation and intonation. Most pupils read with increasing confidence and accuracy in Welsh. They use their reading skills effectively to glean information and present it correctly in research or to retell stories.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils behave very well when moving around the school and on the playgrounds. Most pupils are sensitive to the needs of others including younger pupils and their peers from the learning support centre. They have a strong sense of fair play. Pupils treat adults with respect and maturity and greet them pleasantly.

A major strength throughout the school is the positive attitude and enthusiasm that most pupils have for learning. In classes, almost all pupils are attentive to their teachers and are eager to do well. In key stage 2, most pupils work effectively together. They collaborate well, listen to each other and clearly enjoy working in pairs or groups. In the foundation phase, most remain on task. Many pupils develop their independence well and make choices as they move from one activity to another.

Nearly all pupils feel secure in school and are confident that adults will listen to their concerns and deal with any problems. The 'playground buddy' system operates effectively to allow older pupils to support younger ones. Nearly all play well together at break times, sharing spaces fairly to allow ball games and other play equipment to be used safely.

Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthily and taking exercise. Many bring fruit to school for healthy snacks. They talk knowledgeably about sensible food choices from the school kitchen and what makes up a healthy lunch box. Most are aware of the importance of physical activity and many play ball games at break times. A minority participate in extra-curricular team activity.

Many pupils throughout the school take on roles of responsibility readily. Pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 vote for various groups and committees. They speak enthusiastically about the range of leadership roles available including 'Criw Cymraeg', 'digital wizards' and 'eco warriors'. They know that 'Y Llais', the school council, has collected pupils' views and helped influence school decisions such as changing topics taught in the curriculum.

The 'digital wizards' have designed the signage around the school to help raise awareness of e-safety issues. Pupils throughout the school have a strong understanding of how to stay safe online.

Although the wellbeing of pupils is good when in attendance, sustained high levels of absence are a matter of concern. Levels of attendance are consistently low and have placed the school in the bottom 25% in comparison with similar schools for the last four years.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Nearly all staff manage pupils' behaviour very well. Working relationships between staff and pupils are supportive and productive and place pupils' wellbeing at the heart of classroom activities. Teachers deploy assistants effectively and they work in purposeful partnership with teachers to enhance provision. Nearly all teachers plan lessons effectively, deliver them creatively and enthuse pupils successfully. Teaching is generally at a good pace. Most staff ask skilful questions and this promotes pupils' thinking effectively. Activities provide good opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively, for example when designing an advertising campaign.

Teachers in the foundation phase have a secure understanding of how young children learn. As a result, they maintain a stimulating learning environment indoors and outdoors. This enables the delivery of good quality and effective foundation phase teaching styles from the nursery through to Year 2 and allows pupils to develop confidence and independence. There is a good balance between tasks directed by the teacher and child led learning. Pupils have extensive opportunities to choose what and how they would like to learn and to develop independent learning skills. Teachers make good use of the outdoor areas to encourage imaginative and creative play.

Most teachers have high expectations for pupils. However, in some instances, the challenge for more able pupils is not robust enough. For example, in key stage 2, teachers do not encourage pupils to write at length in their English lessons often enough. They rely too heavily on the use of worksheets in topic and science work. Consequently, pupils do not develop their writing skills fully.

Teachers nearly always explain learning objectives carefully and ensure that pupils know what they need to do to succeed. Many teachers provide pupils with useful

feedback about how well they have completed tasks and when marking they often indicate next steps in learning. However, approaches are inconsistent and a few teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to improve their work in response to feedback. For example, they involve pupils in completing self-assessment or using checklists regarding their work but do not leave them clear enough about their strengths and weaknesses.

The school's planning and provision for pupils to develop skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are effective. In the foundation phase, pupils have worthwhile opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills through a good range of well-planned activities. As they move through the school, most pupils learn to apply their skills well in work across the curriculum. However, opportunities for pupils to develop creative skills in lessons such as music are too limited. The school provides wider experiences for pupils that enhance their learning valuably. For example, they visit the Caerleon Roman fortress and take residential visits to Margam Park. Around half of the pupils attend the weekly extra-curricular 'Glee Club' where they enjoy participating in performance activities. However, overall, there is a limited range of after-school activities on offer.

The provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is supportive and pupils have appropriate opportunities to learn about the culture and heritage of Wales. For example, pupils visited the theatre to watch 'The Ghost of Morfa Colliery'. The school is in partnership with 'Campau'r Ddraig' with the Sports Council for Wales. This provides valuable additional opportunities for pupils to participate in sport as well as to practise their use of the Welsh language.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school provides a good range of different programmes and beneficial intervention groups to support pupils with additional learning needs in literacy and numeracy. Teachers collect information effectively and discuss assessment and pupil tracking regularly. In this way, the school identifies all pupils in need of support successfully. Staff know pupils well and provide good support for those experiencing emotional and social difficulties. For example, the school delivers a relationship based play intervention, aimed at supporting children with attachment, emotional and social difficulties. This engages pupils effectively and helps to improve social behaviours. The school successfully identifies all pupils at risk of underachieving and puts in place appropriate individual plans to support them. The learning support centre is a well-organised learning environment that provides strong support to pupils with special educational needs. The school involves these pupils well in other activities such as assemblies and concerts and this integrates them effectively into the wider life of the school.

Staff offer an appropriate range of opportunities for parents to find out about the work their children are doing in school. Various electronic methods keep parents well informed about the school's life and work. For example, a mobile phone application provides parents with regular notifications about their child's achievements and promotes joint efforts to maintain progress. End of year reports to parents provide useful information about the next steps that pupils need to take to improve in different subjects or areas of learning.

School leaders have in place a range of strategies to promote good attendance and punctuality, including working closely with the local authority. However, these approaches are not effective enough. Attendance continues to be poor and is often influenced adversely by parents removing pupils for holidays during term time.

There are appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Teachers encourage pupils to bring fruit at break times. They have good opportunities to learn about making healthy lifestyle choices. For example, key stage 2 pupils enjoy learning about and preparing healthy sandwiches during a bakery visit. The sports ambassadors encourage others to be physically active during break times and the school makes good use of local sports facilities to support the physical education curriculum. The 'digital wizards' are working well to raise awareness of internet safety for pupils of all ages.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

This is a caring community that develops pupils' personal and social skills well. Collaborative working is central to classroom activities. Pupils demonstrate respect and tolerance for each other during lessons and throughout the school day. In regular assemblies, pupils consider moral issues and reflect on their relationships with others. Pupils of all ages perform in traditional concerts such as the Christmas celebration and traditional nativity for parents and grandparents. The school links effectively with community organisations such as Swansea City Football Club to enhance provision. Pupils in key stage 2 enjoy learning to knit with the 'Knitting Nanas' grandparents group each week.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher has a strong and purposeful vision and sets a clear strategic direction for the school. She communicates high expectations, and senior teachers, staff and governors support her effectively. The headteacher leads strongly by example. As a result, throughout the school there is a purposeful and supportive atmosphere that benefits all pupils and staff.

The headteacher has redefined the roles and responsibilities of teachers effectively, ensuring that they have a clear understanding of their contribution to school improvement. She has reviewed and revised professional development arrangements appropriately. This is resulting in a strong culture of collaboration and teamwork in the school and there is a willingness to take on new ideas and ways of working. For example, the revised curriculum enables teachers to offer interesting and stimulating learning experiences for pupils, which have a positive effect on their wellbeing and skills development.

Governors have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They visit classes regularly and also scrutinise performance data. This enables them to form a clear judgement on pupils' standards of work and attainment. They are developing an increasingly strategic role in implementing priorities for improvement, for example through their appointment of the headteacher and subsequent involvement in changes to staffing and curriculum.

There is a sound self-evaluation process, which includes all staff members and governors. The school also makes good use of questionnaires to gather views from parents and pupils. For example, pupils' opinions influenced a significant and beneficial change to the type of books used in the teaching of reading. Leaders consider performance data, lesson observations and book scrutiny to inform improvement priorities effectively. The self-evaluation report is informative and gives an honest and accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Priorities in the school improvement plan are appropriate and derive directly from the evidence gathered during the self-evaluation process. There are detailed targets for all indicators, and responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness are clear. An example of effective school improvement is the way in which the foundation phase learning environment and the quality of foundation phase teaching and learning have improved. However, targets to improve attainment by more able pupils in the school and to raise levels of attendance remain areas to address.

Effective performance management arrangements set strategic targets to improve pupils' standards and encourage professional development of all staff. There are valuable opportunities for staff to improve their skills and professional knowledge and to share good practice with other schools. A positive outcome of this is that more teachers are taking on leadership responsibilities. This has a positive effect on planning and teaching within the school and promotes valuable wider professional learning activity.

The headteacher and governors monitor expenditure carefully and prudent financial management is resulting in bringing the school out of deficit without adverse impact on provision. Leaders use the significant funds raised by parents effectively to buy equipment and resources for pupils, for example the recent purchase of additional tablet computers and outdoor play equipment. Purposeful use of the pupil development grant improves outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals and focuses appropriately on meeting their needs. As a result, nearly all of the targeted pupils make good progress.

Copies of the report

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

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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