



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

A report on

**Thornwell Primary School
Thornwell Road
Bulwark
Chepstow
Monmouthshire
NP16 5NT**

Date of inspection: February 2020

by

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

About Thornwell Primary School

Thornwell Primary School is in Chepstow in Monmouthshire local authority. There are 315 pupils on roll aged from 3 to 11 years, including 43 who attend part-time in the nursery. The school organises its pupils into six single-age classes, three mixed-age classes and the nursery.

Around 27% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average of 18%. The school identifies about 12% of pupils as having special educational needs. This is below the national average of 21%. A very few pupils come from an ethnic minority background or have English as an additional language. A very few pupils speak Welsh at home.

The headteacher took up his post in September 2015. Prior to this, he was acting-headteacher from January 2014. The school's last inspection was in December 2013.

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

Thornwell Primary School offers its pupils a vibrant and engaging curriculum. For example, its fifty-one exciting activities that all children should experience in primary school helps to ensure that pupils enjoy school and attain well.

Throughout the school, most pupils make strong progress in many areas of the curriculum. Pupils' effective speaking, listening and writing skills allow them to express themselves successfully. Pupils are polite, enthusiastic and supportive of one another.

Leaders work diligently to ensure that all pupils benefit from their time in school. They consider pupils' wellbeing diligently and use this to support pupils' personal growth and their learning well.

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 Ensure that all pupils make effective progress in developing their mathematics skills as they progress through key stage 2
- R2 Provide pupils in the foundation phase with more regular opportunities to engage in independent and active learning experiences
- R3 Sharpen monitoring processes so that they focus consistently on evaluating the progress pupils make and the standards they achieve

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

During their time at school, most pupils make good progress and achieve well, in line with their age and ability. Most pupils with special educational needs make effective progress towards their individual targets. However, a few more able pupils who are eligible for free school meals do not always attain as highly as their peers.

As they move through the foundation phase, many pupils make strong progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. In the Nursery, many listen well to adults and speak clearly to their friends, for example when sharing class rules. By the end of the foundation phase, many pupils speak well and use increasingly complex language to explain their tasks. For example, they describe creatively what makes a good explorer when searching for clues in the outdoor area. Throughout key stage 2, most pupils use their speaking and listening skills effectively, for example when sharing ideas in pairs or in small groups. By the end of the stage, most express their ideas clearly, using a well-developed vocabulary. For example, when discussing writing techniques, they identify and explain onomatopoeia and metaphors maturely.

In the foundation phase, most pupils develop a useful understanding of letters and sounds and make good progress in reading. By Year 2, many read well, with increasing fluency. They discuss the main characters in stories and discuss facts that they have learned from non-fiction texts. Most pupils in key stage 2 use their reading skills effectively to support their learning. Towards the end of the key stage, many have a good understanding of how punctuation affects sentence structure and meaning. They recognise well when authors use different techniques to describe events and places. For example, they know when writing is not literal, such as the description of a crowd as a 'sea of faces'.

Most pupils make effective progress in developing their writing skills. In the foundation phase, many younger pupils write their name confidently using sketchpads. By Year 1, many write simple sentences effectively, using a given sound, for example 'I look in my cook book'. In Year 2, many pupils write well for a variety of purposes, for example diary entries. They are beginning to apply the features of different genres successfully. In key stage 2, many pupils structure a range of texts effectively, including letters, biographies and stories. By Year 6, many make effective language choices. For example, they formulate interesting newspaper headlines that engage the reader, such as 'friend or food'. Many pupils use a wide range of punctuation accurately to clarify meaning, and spell many irregular words correctly. Many use their literacy skills effectively across the curriculum. For example, they record their scientific work in good detail, explaining carefully how they completed their work and drawing useful conclusions from their research.

Throughout the school, many pupils have positive attitudes to learning and using Welsh. In the Nursery, pupils join in with the 'bore da' song happily and use a few Welsh words confidently, for example when discussing the weather. By Year 2, many pupils have made appropriate progress in developing their language skills.

They use a few simple, appropriate phrases. For example, they can tell others what they like and ask others who they are. As they progress through key stage 2, many pupils develop their skills more rapidly. In Year 4, many use a worthwhile range of sentence patterns in their topic work, for instance to describe St David. By Year 6, most use a wide range of sentences confidently, in the present and past tense.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make worthwhile progress in developing their mathematical skills. Many select appropriate mathematical techniques to use in their learning activities. For example, when sorting animals, most pupils in the Reception class add on correctly to find how many there are in each group. By Year 2, many pupils have effective mathematical and numeracy skills. For example, they count in 5s accurately and use this skill well when paying for items with coins. However, a minority struggle to identify a range of 3D shapes accurately. As they progress through key stage 2, many pupils make appropriate progress. In Year 3, many pupils apply their numeracy skills well when working in the outdoors. For example, they solve problems involving ratios to predict how many cuts they need to create 10 sticks. By Year 6, many pupils understand appropriately how to gather and represent data in graphs and tables. They use these skills confidently to analyse simple information, such as comparing temperatures between two locations. However, towards the end of the key stage, a minority struggle with understanding a few important concepts, such as simple probability, and using place value to multiply or divided numbers by factors of ten. In general, most pupils apply their numeracy skills at a similar level across the curriculum.

Most pupils develop effective information and communication technology (ICT) skills and use them well across the curriculum. In the foundation phase, many pupils use tablet computers confidently, for example to play maths and reading games to supplement their learning. They photograph their work and upload it independently. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils use a comprehensive range of software competently to support their learning. For example, they use spreadsheets to record and analyse data efficiently, and create interesting presentations to share their ideas and learning.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Most pupils feel happy and safe in school, and know to whom they can turn if they are worried or have a problem. Nearly all have a clear understanding of how to keep safe online. For example, they know the importance of setting passwords, not sharing them with anyone and that they should not put their personal information on the internet. Most pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and taking part in exercise and many participate enthusiastically in a wide range of school clubs, such as netball and football. Nearly all enjoy the daily fitness and yoga sessions that benefit them physically and contribute effectively to their general wellbeing.

The behaviour of nearly all pupils is good. They are tolerant of each other, play well together and treat each other and adults with courtesy and respect. Pupils from across the school co-operate and collaborate effectively, for example during the coding club and 'Cryw Cymraeg' meetings.

Most pupils have a good understanding of children's rights and take seriously the school's commitment to respect everybody. The school's 'star friends' use their

training in restorative practices beneficially to assist with disagreements on the yard at playtimes. Most pupils have very positive attitudes to others and understand that they should treat everyone with respect. This is a particularly strong feature of the school, which pupils, staff and parents value.

Across the school, pupil leadership is developing well in areas such as the eco council and the peer observers. Pupils in these groups take their roles and responsibilities seriously. For example, peer observers undertake learning walks with school leaders to help them identify whether pupils are ready to learn, listen and follow instructions, and allow lessons to carry on without disruption. This enables them to influence the life of the school well.

Most pupils have a positive attitude towards school and learning. They enjoy the opportunities offered to them and are eager to learn. Many have developed sufficient self-control and resilience to stay on task. For example, pupils in Year 4 work together in groups diligently to collect data about the impact of exercise on their fitness levels. In most classes, pupils work together productively and share their ideas beneficially. This helps them to complete most tasks effectively.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Teachers and support assistants establish highly positive working relationship with pupils. This allows pupils to feel confident that they can ask questions and request help with their learning. Many teachers relate pupils' learning to real-life contexts effectively and this helps to create enthusiasm in many lessons. For example, pupils write interesting poems to share with each other around the campfire on their camping trip. Many teachers have high expectations of pupils, and this helps to ensure that most pupils try their best throughout the day. However, in a few classes, teachers over-direct lessons at the expense of engaging pupils in their learning. This limits pupils' ability to develop independence and make more rapid progress.

Most teachers give pupils useful oral feedback, and question them effectively to explore their understanding. This helps to address misconceptions and identify where pupils can improve their work. Many teachers also provide pupils with valuable written feedback, which helps them to understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to make progress. However, teachers do not do this consistently well across the school. Teachers are beginning to provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to consider the quality of their own work and that of their peers. This helps pupils to identify where they need to improve usefully.

Overall, the school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for its pupils. Long term planning is comprehensive and support teachers to build systematically on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills as they move through the school. Throughout the foundation phase and key stage 2, teachers make effective use of outdoor learning spaces to encourage pupils to be physically active and to develop their knowledge and skills. For example, pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 develop their mathematical language and understanding well when measuring and cutting the length of sticks to create spikes for a hedgehog's coat. In the foundation phase, the use of 'over to you' time gives pupils effective opportunities to engage with stimulating, independent learning activities. For example, pupils collect objects from the outdoors, such as twigs and leaves, and use these creatively in their

artwork. However, throughout the day, many foundation phase pupils have limited opportunities to learn through active play. This means that they have too few opportunities to be creative, to investigate and to direct their own learning.

The school plans suitably for developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. For example, In Year 5, teachers encourage pupils to use spreadsheets to analyse data on rainfall for their class topic. In Year 4, pupils have good opportunities to write engaging diary entries about a day in the life of a Victorian child to support their history work.

Most teachers provide pupils with an effective range of interesting learning opportunities, which engage most pupils successfully. They provide pupils with beneficial opportunities to plan activities linked to their class topics. For example, pupils in the foundation phase took part in a winter jewellery making activity, while pupils in key stage 2 plan outdoor art for their topic on rivers. Staff enrich pupils' learning successfully through stimulating trips and visitors, such as a local bat expert who recently visited school and led a busy and interesting family bat-tour of the local environment to listen to and identify bat species. The school has developed an innovative T51 programme of fifty-one activities, suggested by pupils, parents and the community, aimed at enriching pupils' lives. For example, the list includes giving pupils the chance to shout in a cave, dam a river and care for a pet before they leave primary school. This broad range of stimulating activities helps to ensure that pupils enjoy school and engage in activities confidently.

The school promotes the Welsh language effectively. Many staff encourage pupils to develop and use everyday Welsh in classrooms and around the school purposefully. The school's curriculum promotes Welsh culture effectively, for example by providing opportunities for pupils to study famous Welsh people. The school's curriculum reflects the nature of the school's local context successfully.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has thorough systems for tracking pupils' achievement and progress. Leaders and teachers analyse data effectively to monitor pupils' progress and to identify those who may need additional support. This includes beneficial work with a local pre-school provision to identify pupils who may require support at an early stage during their time in school. They ensure that pupils in need of individual support benefit from effective intervention, adapted to the needs of the pupil.

There is strong provision for pupils with special educational needs. Staff deliver a beneficial range of intervention programmes that address pupils' educational and emotional needs effectively. For example, the gardening club helps develop pupils' social skills and has a positive impact on engaging pupils in school life. Staff develop individual targets for pupils in collaboration with pupils and parents. Staff work positively with a broad range of outside agencies, for example the ethnic minority service, to support pupils identified as having particular needs. This ensures that these pupils benefit from specialist, targeted support.

The school is an extremely caring and inclusive community. All staff are committed to ensuring that all pupils develop as happy and confident individuals. They develop highly effective working relationships with pupils. As a result, many pupils are able to

talk openly about their problems and have positive attitudes towards learning. All adults within the school community take responsibility for nurturing pupils' wellbeing. For example, the school provides a designated nurture room, where a well-trained learning support assistant provides effective care and guidance for vulnerable pupils. This feature of the school help these pupils to manage their emotions and engage in learning successfully.

There are many opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities in the school, for example, the 'star friends' and school council. Leaders and staff take pupils' ideas seriously and often act on their recommendations to improve pupils' school experiences. For example, the eco team have improved the school grounds to provide appropriate habitats for bats.

The planned curriculum promotes pupils' understanding of their rights and values well. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of how people live within their own community and the wider world. Pupils relate these maturely to their understanding of their rights. For example, older pupils learn about important issues, such as the possible causes of homelessness. Leaders and teachers ensure that all pupils benefit from opportunities to develop their skills in the arts. For example, the school provides a wide range of in-class and extra-curricular enrichment activities, such as dance and drama clubs, that develop pupils' performing and artistic abilities successfully.

The school has effective arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking and it promotes physical activity very well. The afternoon 'fit factor' session helps pupils to keep fit and healthy. This means that pupils have a good understanding that exercise is important for their physical health and wellbeing. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirement and give no cause for concern.

The school's relationship with families is strong. Staff communicate well with parents and carers through social media and the school's website. There are good opportunities for families to take part in the life and work of the school. For example, the T51 project encourages family members to identify experiences that now form part of the school's wider curriculum and enrichment opportunities. Learning support assistants run a series of valuable programmes for parents to help them to know how to support their children. For example, at the play development sessions, parents learn how to make play an enjoyable experience for young children. In addition, the school offers parents opportunities to develop their own skills. For example, a recent cooking together programme helped parents to improve their cooking skills.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides effective and supportive leadership for the school. He has established a clear vision that focuses strongly on promoting the wellbeing and achievement of all pupils. Staff and governors understand this vision well and, together, they share it confidently with pupils and parents. The vision is evident throughout the school, and its core aim of ensuring that pupils are happy and successful learners is an integral part of the school ethos. As a result, most pupils are engaged in their learning and make good progress. Leaders are beginning to develop their thinking about introducing the new curriculum for Wales, including the

digital competence framework. For example, teachers have started to consider how learning experiences for pupils might take account of the four purposes of the new curriculum.

Members of the senior leadership team support the headteacher well. They have high expectations of pupils and work closely together to provide a caring and stimulating learning environment. All members of staff display positive, professional working relationships that support the school's caring ethos successfully. They have a secure knowledge of their roles and responsibilities and carry them out with commitment and enthusiasm.

Leaders support the professional learning of staff well. They distribute leadership roles across the school effectively, and this enables many staff to take on additional responsibilities. For example, teaching assistants lead the school's community engagement team successfully. Leaders promote an effective professional learning culture amongst the staff, for example by supporting them to undertake action research into aspects of their areas of responsibility. As a result, teachers have improved the way that they consider pupil voice in curriculum planning. Teachers work well together to ensure that there are common approaches to many aspects of their work. For example, due to the consistent way that staff manage and support pupils' wellbeing, behaviour across the school is consistently good. The school's arrangements for staff's performance management help to strengthen teachers' professional practice and support the school to achieve many of its improvement priorities. Leaders evaluate the impact of training on outcomes for pupils and the school well.

Members of the governing body bring a wide range of relevant skills and expertise to their roles, which they use to support the curriculum, such as providing an after school club to teach pupils French. They provide active support and engage well with the school's self-evaluation processes. For example, they are involved in self-evaluation activities, such as focused learning walks, which culminate in an annual governing body self-evaluation day. They know the school's strategic priorities and understand how this informs and develops good practice. They have a good understanding of their statutory duties and provide robust levels of challenge.

School leaders make suitable use of a range of first-hand evidence, such as the scrutiny of pupils' work and learning walks, to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders track pupil performance carefully and use the information suitably to identify areas where standards need to improve. This has led to improvements, for example in pupils' writing and presentation skills. However, monitoring does not always focus sharply enough on evaluating how well pupils are doing, for example pupils' mathematics skills towards the end of key stage 2.

The headteacher, school administration assistant and governors, monitor finances diligently. They are managing the school's deficit recovery plan prudently and the deficit budget is reducing appropriately. Leaders use additional funding, such as the pupil deprivation grant, suitably to support provision for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable to underachievement. For example, they are used to deploy staff effectively to deliver intervention programmes for pupils who need additional support with specific aspects of their learning. They also provide beneficial pastoral care to support their emotional wellbeing. As a result, the school achieves good outcomes for most pupils.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent 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 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' wellbeing, 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)

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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Publication date: 15/04/2020