



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

A report on
Whitchurch Primary School

Erw Las
Whitchurch
Cardiff
CF14 1NL

Date of inspection: April 2024

by

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

This inspection was undertaken as part of trying out our new inspection arrangements. As a result, this report may be slightly different in format to other published reports for providers in the sector.

About Whitchurch Primary School

Name of provider	Whitchurch Primary School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Religious character	n/a
Number of pupils on roll	687
Pupils of statutory school age	587
Number in nursery classes	80
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%)	12.7%
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%)	8.7%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	n/a
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language (categories A-C)	9.4%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2012
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	19/01/2015
Start date of inspection	22/04/2024

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

Whitchurch Primary School is a thriving learning community where pupils feel safe and valued. The headteacher's compassionate leadership, supported by two deputy headteachers, committed governors, and a wider leadership team, fosters an inclusive ethos where pupils develop as creative, independent thinkers. The school has made significant progress in refining its curriculum, with teachers providing a rich range of stimulating learning experiences that cater to individual pupil needs. As a result, nearly all pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), engage positively with the opportunities available to them and make at least sound progress.

From an early age, pupils are encouraged to be curious and explore the world around them. By Year 6, pupils confidently choose areas to research and decide how they will present their work. Staff monitor pupils' progress effectively, providing helpful feedback and encouraging resilience and independence in learning. Teachers plan systematically for the progressive development of pupils' literacy skills, and most pupils use their reading and writing skills well in their wider learning. However, opportunities for older pupils to develop and apply their reading skills at a suitable level are not yet consistent enough.

The school ensures that pupils frequently apply their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. There is a strong, inclusive culture, and provision for pupils with ALN is highly successful. The school's arrangements to manage pupil attendance are sound, but the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals remains a concern. Leadership across the school is highly effective, with a dedicated governing body working alongside leaders and staff to monitor and evaluate progress in teaching and learning. The school operates successfully within its financial capabilities and provides valuable opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills. Staff value the wide range of professional development offered, and the school makes a positive contribution to developing teaching across the region.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Improve the attendance of pupils that are eligible for free school meals
- R2 Further develop and refine opportunities to develop older pupils' reading skills

What happens next

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

Main findings

Whitchurch Primary School is a vibrant learning community where pupils feel safe and valued. The headteacher provides strong, compassionate leadership with a clear vision for improvement. She is supported well by two highly effective deputy headteachers, a team of committed governors and a capable wider leadership team. Together, they ensure that leadership is distributed successfully across the school. Pupils and staff thrive in the school's inclusive ethos where pupils develop as creative, independent thinkers during their time at the school.

The school has made strong progress in designing and refining its curriculum. Most teachers are skilful practitioners who show a secure understanding of the individual needs and interests of the pupils they teach. They use this knowledge well to provide a rich range of stimulating learning experiences that motivate and challenge pupils successfully. As a result, nearly all pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), engage positively with the opportunities available to them and are enthusiastic about their time in school. Most pupils make at least sound progress from their individual starting points and apply their learning effectively in a broad range of meaningful contexts.

Staff provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to be curious, explore the world around them and to carry out their own inquiries. This work is rooted in the school's curriculum and begins from an early age, when the youngest pupils enjoy exploring the school's outdoor classroom and wider learning environment. By Year 6, pupils choose areas to research confidently and make independent choices about how they will present their work. For example, after learning about the difference between refugees and migrants, older pupils chose to create a questionnaire to gather information as part of their inquiry about their family origins.

Staff monitor pupils' progress in lessons effectively. They use questioning appropriately to check pupils' understanding. In the best instances, they probe and extend pupils' thinking with care. Staff provide helpful verbal feedback to pupils that supports them to make progress. Where appropriate, they allow pupils to find their own solutions to obstacles in their learning. Consequently, pupils often persevere to make progress when working in small groups or on their own.

Teachers plan systematically for the progressive development of pupils' literacy skills. Younger pupils make rapid progress in developing their knowledge of letter sounds and by Year 2, most pupils use their reading and writing skills well in their wider learning. Most older pupils use their reading skills effectively to gather relevant facts to support their independent work. Recently, teachers have adapted the way they teach older pupils more advanced reading skills such as the use of inference and deduction. Where this practice is most effective, pupils develop their ability to infer meaning from text and pictures and to justify their thinking by referring to what they read. However, this work is at a relatively early stage and opportunities for older pupils to develop and apply their reading skills at a suitable level are not yet consistent enough. Teachers use focused sessions effectively to build most pupils' Welsh speaking skills well.

Leaders ensure that staff have valuable opportunities to collaborate and plan the next steps in pupils' learning. Staff carefully consider the progress that pupils have made and use this thoughtfully to plan future lessons and activities and adapt their approach. For example, teachers have made improvements to the way they teach mathematical skills and because of this, most pupils show greater fluency and confidence when problem-solving. This work supports pupils well to develop their skills progressively and over time.

Staff ensure that pupils have frequent and purposeful opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. For example, by Year 3 most pupils use their estimation and measuring skills effectively in scientific investigations. By Year 6, most pupils speak with maturity and confidence, listening with careful consideration to their peers when debating the pay gap between male and female athletes.

Cameo – highly effective professional learning

Staff value the wide range of professional development that leaders offer. A comprehensive programme of coaching and mentoring supports staff effectively to develop their teaching and leadership expertise. The school provides worthwhile leadership support for schools in the cluster and makes a positive contribution to developing teaching across the region. As a lead partnership school, the school provides extensive support for students in collaboration with local universities.

There is a strong, inclusive culture that permeates all aspects of school life. Staff are supportive role models and, as a result, pupils are respectful of adults and their peers showing high levels of care, kindness and consideration to those around them. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is highly successful. The school's Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo) and deputy headteacher collaborate well and monitor the impact of provision skilfully. They ensure that all staff receive appropriate professional learning so that they understand and meet the requirements of Welsh Government's ALN Reform. This supports staff to adapt the school's provision effectively enabling most pupils with ALN to make strong progress from their individual starting points.

Generally, the school's arrangements to manage the attendance of pupils are sound. Staff have positive relationships with families and work with them sensitively to provide support to overcome any obstacles to regular attendance. However, despite improvement in the overall attendance rates of pupils, the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals remains a cause for concern. Leaders do not always target grant funding carefully enough to improve outcomes for these pupils.

Cameo –developing pupils’ leadership skills

Provision to develop pupils’ leadership skills is particularly successful. Most pupils participate in a wide variety of pupil leadership roles. These provide good opportunities for pupils to hold positions of responsibility and to make a difference to the life of the school and the wider community. For example, pupils in the Criw Cymraeg create an annual Caffi Cymraeg for their parents and a further Caffi for grandparents, to support their Welsh conversation skills.

Leadership across the school is highly effective. The headteacher has developed a successful team who know their school well. The dedicated governing body work alongside leaders and staff to monitor and evaluate progress in teaching and learning. As a result, leaders have a good understanding of school strengths and areas in need of improvement. Governors work with the headteacher to manage school finances and resources carefully and to make prudent decisions that support the school effectively.

Additional information

The school’s arrangements for safeguarding pupils 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.

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

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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