

A report on the quality of secondary education

in

**Bishop Gore School
De La Beche Road
Sketty
Swansea
SA2 9AP**

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by

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



**INVESTORS | BUDDSODDWYR
IN PEOPLE | MEWN POBL**

This inspection was a pilot of the new inspection framework and arrangements that are to be introduced in all school from September 2010. The types of judgements and the format of the report are different from the reports on other schools that are still being inspected under the current arrangements and inspection framework.

Inspectors provide an overall judgement on Bishop Gore School's current performance and on its capacity to improve.

During each inspection, inspectors also aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	Judgement descriptions
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

Estyn's reports follow its guidance for the writing and editing of reports, which is available on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk). The table below shows the terms that Estyn uses and a broad idea of their meaning. The table is for guidance only.

Nearly all	with very few exceptions
Most	90% or more
Many	70% or more
A majority	over 60%
Half/around half	close to 50%
A minority	below 40%
Few	below 20%
Very few	less than 10%

Context

Bishop Gore School is an 11 to 18 comprehensive school situated in the Sketty area of Swansea. The school has occupied the present site for over 50 years. The school has a Specialist Teaching Facility (STF) for about 20 pupils funded by the local authority for pupils with specific learning difficulties from all over Swansea. There are 76 teachers, of whom 10 are part-time, making a full-time equivalent of 69.5, and a further 54 support staff, a full-time equivalent of 40.4.

Pupils come to the school from a wide area of Swansea, many from outside the school's designated catchment area. There are currently 1,213 pupils on roll, including 230 in the sixth form. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is 24.6%, which is significantly higher than the Welsh average of 16.3% for secondary schools. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is 24.6% and the percentage of pupils with a statement of SEN is 3.3%. Around 20% of the school's pupils are from a minority ethnic or mixed race background, with half of these coming from Swansea's well-established Asian, mainly Bangladeshi, community.

Twenty-three of the school's pupils speak some Welsh but only two of these speak it fluently.

The school's motto is "Virtue and Good Literature". Its aim is to provide the highest quality learning opportunities for all pupils, recognising that all pupils have diverse needs. To that end, the school seeks to develop a personalised approach to learning. It strives to be 'a learning community that recognises not only the importance of success in terms of grades and levels but also success in all other aspects of school and wider life.' The school aims to value the richness of the different cultures which make up the school community and seeks to celebrate and respect these.

Summary

Overall judgement on the school	Excellent
Prospects for improvement	Excellent

Overall judgement

The school has many outstanding features including several which are sector-leading. These include:

- the standards achieved by pupils;
- the learning experiences;
- the quality of teaching, care support and guidance; and
- the leadership of the head, deputy head and several middle managers.

Prospects for improvement

The school has excellent prospects for improvement because of:

- the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, who is very well supported by the deputy head and several middle managers;
- the very good systems for self-review, monitoring of pupils' performance and planning for progress; and
- the significant strides forward made in the last three years.

Recommendations

In order to improve further, the staff and governors of Bishop Gore School need to:

- R1 support and challenge all managers to perform at the level of the best managers;
- R2 continue to implement strategies to improve the percentage of pupils achieving the Level 1 threshold in key stage 4;
- R3 strengthen the development of pupils' numeracy skills;
- R4 continue to take action to address the budget deficit;
- R5 continue to implement strategies to improve attendance;
- R6 increase the use of incidental Welsh; and
- R7 improve toilet facilities for all pupils.

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Excellent

Standards: Excellent

The school's performance is very good in key stage 3 and key stage 4.

In key stage 3, achievement in the core subjects is very good. When compared with similar schools in the same benchmark group based on free school meals, the school is in the first quarter (the highest 25%) in the core subject indicator (CSI)¹ this year. Compared with the family of schools², achievement is above all other schools in the family in nearly all indicators at National Curriculum (NC) level 5 and above, and also at NC level 6 and above. The percentage of pupils achieving NC level 6 was above the Wales average in 2009 in each of the core subjects. This is an extremely good performance considering that the percentage of pupils with free school meals is well above the Welsh average. In the last three years, pupils made significant progress from key stage 2 to key stage 3 in many indicators, with the greatest value added in English.

In a majority of non-core subjects, the achievement of NC Level 5 in 2009 is in the top half of similar schools.

In key stage 4, performance has been very strong. The percentages of pupils achieving the Level 2 threshold³, and the Level 2 threshold including English and mathematics at grades A* to C, have been in the first quarter of similar schools for the last two years. Achievement at level 2⁴ in each of the three core subjects, and also in the CSI, has been in the first quarter for each of the last three years. This consistently high performance has been achieved by very few other schools in Wales and is an outstanding feature. In 2009, the percentage of pupils gaining at least grade C at GCSE in the core subjects was the highest in the family of schools.

The percentage of pupils achieving the Level 1 threshold⁵ and the wider points score⁶ has been weaker. In 2008 it was in the second quarter of similar schools and in 2009 it was in the third quarter for each of these indicators.

The percentage of post-16 students gaining the level 3 threshold⁷ has improved by 12 percentage points since 2007. This improvement is greater than for Wales as a whole. The percentage gaining at least two higher grades A-C has also improved. However, in both these indicators the school was below the local authority and Wales in 2009.

¹ The core subject indicator relates to performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum.

² Families of schools have been created this year to enable schools to compare their performance to similar schools across Wales. The families are provisional for 2009. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in deprived areas, from ethnic minority backgrounds, and having special education needs.

³ The Level 2 threshold represents a volume of learning equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grade A* to C.

⁴ Level 2 represents the equivalent of a GCSE at grade A* to C.

⁵ The Level 1 threshold represents a volume of learning equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grade D to G.

⁶ The wider points score accommodates all externally approved qualifications.

⁷ The Level 3 threshold represents a volume of learning equivalent to 2 A levels at grade A to E.

In key stage 3 and key stage 4, girls generally perform better than boys. The gender difference in their performance is similar to the national figure. However in 2009, boys performed better than girls in key stage 4 in some indicators such as the CSI and Level 2 including English and mathematics.

In 2009, pupils with English as an additional language performed significantly better than expected in English in key stage 3. In Year 11 they performed better than other pupils in the main indicators. Pupils with SEN make good progress relative to their ability.

The school has been very successful in reducing the number of pupils leaving with no qualifications. In 2009, no pupil left the school without a qualification. At the end of Year 11, 84% of pupils continued in full-time education in school or in further education. Fewer than 6% are not in education, training or employment. This is better than local and national averages. Progression from Year 12 to Year 13 is very good, while most of Year 13 went into higher education or continued in further education.

In the lessons observed and in their coursework, pupils make good progress. Their communication skills are generally good. They listen very well, read a good range of texts with understanding and write competently. Pupils are keen to contribute to discussions, and can answer questions well and at length. Numeracy skills are very good in mathematics. While pupils use these skills well in a minority of subjects, in general numeracy skills are underdeveloped across the curriculum. Many pupils achieve good standards in information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum, and a few achieve excellent standards in specific ICT lessons in key stage 3.

In Welsh, pupils' achievement compared with similar schools is average at the end of key stage 3. Almost all pupils study Welsh to GCSE, and the percentage studying the full course is above the average for the local authority. In 2009, in the short course and full course combined, a third of Year 11 gained A* to C grades and 61% gained A* to G grades. In both these cases, the performance is slightly below the Wales average, but well above the local authority average. Pupils do not use or hear enough incidental Welsh across the curriculum or around the school.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils feel safe in school. They are well behaved, considerate and courteous, and have particularly good attitudes to learning. In most of the lessons observed, pupils were engaged on tasks, worked well with each other and made good progress. Most pupils know their target grade. They have increasing opportunities to influence how they learn.

Pupils show respect and care for others, for example through mentoring younger pupils or listening to them read, and supporting pupils whose first language is not English. Many pupils state that the school deals well with any bullying.

Attendance is adequate. Compared with schools with similar free school meals, the school is about average in key stage 3, but below average in key stage 4.

Many pupils have a clear understanding of how they can become healthy. They participate in a very wide range of physical activities, irrespective of their sporting ability.

Pupils also participate well in other aspects of school life. They are represented on the School Council, year councils, and the change teams, which is a group of pupils, parents, teachers and governors who review aspects of teaching and learning. Pupils also attend governing body meetings and some senior leadership meetings. A wide range of opportunities exists for pupils to participate in decision making and charity or community work, and to support each other through mentoring. Many from across the whole ability range take part in school productions.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Excellent

Learning experiences: Excellent

The curriculum is very broad, balanced and flexible, and fully meets the needs and aspirations of all learners, including those in the Specialist Teaching Facility (STF).

In key stage 3, the school plans well to support pupils as they move from primary school and to widen their experience of other languages. Year 7 pupils get to know their tutors well through lessons in key skills and in personal and social education.

The school has made excellent progress in implementing 14-19 Learning Pathways and has exceeded the requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure ahead of schedule. Pupils aged 14 to 19 choose general and vocational courses from a very wide range of options, including a particularly good choice of vocational courses. The school collaborates well with other local providers to meet the needs of all pupils.

The school plans the delivery of key skills well across the curriculum. Many pupils gain a key skills qualification in key stage 3, while all pupils are working towards qualifications in key stage 4 as part of the Welsh Baccalaureate. Teachers plan well to develop pupils' communication skills, but many do not plan enough ways to help to reinforce numeracy skills.

Pupils have equal opportunities for choosing their courses and a clear progression to the next stage of learning or into employment. There is excellent support for pupils in this area. This support includes a very wide ranging and successful programme to raise pupils' aspirations, and to encourage them to enter further or higher education or to improve their employment prospects. This is a sector-leading feature.

Pupils enjoy an outstanding range of extra-curricular experiences. These include sports, leisure, music, dance and drama activities as well as revision clubs and enrichment in subjects across the curriculum. Pupils undertake useful work-related and community experiences as well as visits locally and further afield. It is a very good feature that many of these activities provide older pupils with opportunities to gain additional qualifications.

The school has improved its provision for Welsh and its support for pupils to gain qualifications in Welsh. Teachers plan well to include examples of the culture of Wales in a range of lessons. The school has not yet made enough progress in developing pupils' use of Welsh outside Welsh lessons.

Teaching: Excellent

The quality of teaching is a significant strength of the school. Teaching was good or better in a high proportion of the lessons observed and had outstanding features in a significant number. Among these are the quality of preparation and planning, the use of innovative approaches, the promotion of active learning and the high level of challenge. Many lessons include very good strategies for developing communication skills, including the use of searching open questions to encourage in-depth responses.

Teachers encourage pupils to develop thinking skills and to express themselves, for example through working with others. Teachers have very good background knowledge of the pupils and use effective strategies to organise and focus their work.

Marking is generally regular and thorough. In many subjects, it includes comments to help pupils understand how well they are doing and how to improve. In a few books, marking is superficial and does not give pupils enough guidance.

In a majority of lessons, pupils evaluate their own progress and achievement. In these lessons, many pupils benefit from this practice and contribute perceptive judgements. However, a few of these pupils do not yet fully understand the criteria they should use to assess their work.

Pupils are given a target, known as a Global Grade, based on a range of information. Pupils, parents and teachers all understand these grades very well and use them consistently. The Global Grades provide the basis for an extremely effective assessment system. This involves setting individual targets, recording and tracking pupils' achievement and progress, and identifying underachievement in individuals, groups or whole classes.

Overall, reports to parents are very good. Parents receive three reports a year linked to the Global Grades system. These reports provide very clear information on the level of pupils' attainment and identify what they need to do to improve. Parents consider that they are very well informed about their child's progress.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

Pupils, parents and carers receive very good advice and guidance. Helpful curriculum and assessment publications, including a range of booklets on 14-19 Learning Pathways, give balanced information to pupils before they make decisions about options in Year 9 and Year 11.

Learning coach provision for 14 to 19 year old pupils is a significant strength. Two members of staff have completed modules of learning coach training. Thirty support staff have also been trained to mentor pupils as part of the Welsh Baccalaureate programme.

Personal and specialist services are sector leading. Pupils can access a very wide range of internal and external provision and are fully aware of the excellent services available within the school. Pupils with more complex needs are referred promptly to external agencies.

The school's systems and support network to promote pupils' health, behaviour and wellbeing are a very strong feature. The computerised behaviour tracking system is an example of the proactive approach which is a common feature across many of the school's intervention strategies. The community support team, counsellors, nurse, Ethnic Minority Language and Achievement Service (EMLAS) team and Ethnic Youth Support Team drop-in centre provide excellent support for vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. Pupil support managers for each year group, supported by form tutors, perform a key role in monitoring pupils' wellbeing. Practice in Year 7 and Year 10 is particularly good.

The comprehensive personal and social education programme covers emotional wellbeing, sexual health, and substance misuse. There are clear procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying. The Behaviour for Learning policy provides wide ranging procedures for rewarding good behaviour and employing sanctions. It contains excellent guidance and pupils have been involved in its creation. Most pupils understand the system and feel that it has helped to improve behaviour.

The school has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding pupils.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is outstanding. The school has a number of well co-ordinated strategies to meet individual needs. These include literacy programmes, nurture groups and a social communication skills programme. Highly effective systems monitor and support pupils, and give them access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are included well in the school community and attend classes with other pupils.

Individual education plans (IEPs) are comprehensive. They set out suitable targets for improvement and are reviewed twice a year. A learning support assistant continuously monitors and supports the progress of each pupil with an IEP. The system for storing IEPs enables all members of staff to check them easily. A very large number of multi-disciplinary agencies works in partnership with the school to ensure pupils are supported to achieve their potential.

Parents of pupils with additional learning needs are kept well informed and are fully involved with their child's education.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. The very positive school ethos provides a stable and ordered environment in which values such as honesty, fairness and respect are given particular emphasis.

Learning environment: Good

The school is a fully-inclusive community where diversity is recognised and celebrated. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs and values as well as those of others. The respect for the cultural identity of all pupils is a particularly good feature of the school.

Pupils have positive attitudes to diversity, and the school's inclusive ethos is a significant strength.

The school actively promotes equal opportunities and all pupils have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and extra curricular provision. The school offers a safe

and welcoming environment for all learners. Support staff, both within and from outside the school, provide a first-class service to support any child from an ethnic minority. This service is a model of exemplary practice.

The quality of staffing and resources for learning is good. Teachers and the large number of support staff are well qualified and suitably trained. The accommodation is adequate overall. There are some attractive and well-constructed displays, but a few corridors are very bare. The interior of the school is clean. Sports facilities are generally acceptable but need improvement. Toilet facilities are only adequate.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Excellent
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Leadership: Excellent

The quality of leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, together with a number of middle managers, is an outstanding feature. The head and deputy head have a well-developed capacity to look critically at provision and to plan clearly how it can be improved. They set high expectations and have a clear vision and a commitment to continually improve standards and provide pupils with the best opportunities. Staff share these expectations.

Over the past three years the school has made very good progress in implementing systems to improve learning and monitor pupils' progress. The significant improvement in pupils' attainment in recent years is directly linked to these new systems, which have created a successful learning culture within the school.

The school's strategic direction is clearly communicated through its plans and policies. Analysis of performance clearly identifies areas for improvement, and leaders take appropriate follow-up action to improve the performance of subjects and of individual members of staff.

The school takes very good account of national priorities, for example 14-19 Learning Pathways. Here it identifies national and local needs in extending the subjects on offer to learners.

The governing body carries out its duties effectively and is well informed about the work of the school. Governors hold the school to account for the standards and quality it achieves, and provide very good levels of support. In all respects they fulfil their legal and regulatory duties.

Partnership working: Excellent

The headteacher has a clear vision for partnership working and the school has developed very effective links with relevant organisations.

The school has a very good partnership with Swansea College and a small number of work-based learning providers to widen the opportunities for learners and improve the cost effectiveness of provision. An open and honest system of quality assurance across the partnership includes peer observation of lessons. Collaboration with other schools in the Swansea West 14-19 partnership further extends curriculum choices for pupils, who will receive a common prospectus for options at key stage 4 this year.

Pupils benefit from the comprehensive strategies for engaging parents' help in focusing on pupils' standards of achievement and wellbeing. Parents are actively involved in a very wide range of consultation, discussion and guidance opportunities. They have recently contributed to improvements in pupil reports. The partnership with parents is a sector-leading feature of the school, and parents speak very highly of the support it provides.

Pupils also benefit from strong links with a wide range of multi-disciplinary agencies help to meet their needs. For example, there is careful and responsive co-ordination of external and internal support for pupils with additional learning needs.

Pastoral and curricular links with feeder primary schools are very effective. A well planned programme of activities and information sharing supports the smooth transition of pupils between key stage 2 and key stage 3.

The school has links with an increasing range of local employers and has established specific programmes with outside organisations to raise pupils' expectations. It benefits from well-established links with three initial teacher training institutions and a range of local authority officers and support services.

Quality improvement: Excellent

An extremely strong improvement culture pervades the school and drives a well-defined improvement agenda. Highly-effective systems underpin a well-designed cycle of self-evaluation and improvement planning.

The self-evaluation report is detailed, accurate and realistic. The school has a particularly secure and well-informed awareness of its strengths and areas for development, gained through comprehensive and robust self-evaluation procedures. These are based on an extensive programme of rigorous team reviews, detailed analysis of a wide range of performance data and well-established performance management arrangements. Through a wide range of both formal and informal consultations, particularly good attention is given to gathering and analysing the views of parents and pupils. Self-evaluation has led to a wide range of strategies and initiatives that have contributed to significant improvement in many areas of the school's work.

Whole-school and team development plans are particularly well designed and include a wide range of appropriate initiatives. These support clear objectives that derive directly from the findings of self-evaluation. Plans include detailed success criteria that, where appropriate, include measurable and suitably challenging targets.

The school identifies the professional development needs of all staff. In addition to the extensive and relevant whole-school in-service programme, almost all staff have undertaken training associated with team development priorities, while many teams promote good practice through peer observation. A very good feature is that the school has established a network of links to promote good practice with other members of its family of schools.

The school has made very good progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its resources well.

Staff are deployed effectively to support learning. Appropriate arrangements ensure the school meets statutory requirements relating to the national agreement on 'Raising Standards and Tackling Workload'.

Good use is made of the available facilities. A suitable premises development plan identifies areas in need of repair, refurbishment and redecoration, and underpins a programme to maintain and improve accommodation.

Through robust procedures, all expenditure is very carefully prioritised to reflect whole-school and team needs. Team budgets are allocated through a well-understood formula. A well-considered three-year recovery plan, approved by the local authority, addresses an inherited deficit and high staffing levels with relevant priorities for necessary action. The school has also considered appropriate medium-term strategies to respond to changing economic conditions.

The school provides good value for money. Careful management of resources, a particular emphasis on collaboration to increase the range of courses and qualifications at key stage 4 and in the sixth form, as well as other effective initiatives, have led to significant improvement in standards and provision in many areas of the school's work.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report:

Responses to parent questionnaires

Estyn received 216 responses to the parent questionnaire. Most parents gave a positive or very positive response to most questions.

Nearly all parents are satisfied with the school and state that their children like the school, are safe there, were helped to settle in well when they started school, and are making good progress. They consider teaching and staff expectations to be good, and that the school is effective at promoting their children's wellbeing and development. They are particularly positive about their links with the school and the way it informs them about their children's progress. They think that the school is well run.

Most parents are satisfied with the homework provided, the way in which staff treat and support their children, the preparation for moving on to the next school or college, and the range of extra-curricular activities.

While many parents think that pupils behave well, a few believe that this is not the case.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Estyn received responses from 274 pupils. Most pupils state that they feel safe in school and are doing well, that they have enough resources and that the school helps them to understand and respect people from other backgrounds.

Many pupils say that the school deals well with bullying and any concerns they have, and that there are plenty of opportunities for regular exercise. They say that staff help them to learn, treat them with respect, encourage them to take responsibility and give them good support in planning for the future.

A majority of pupils say that the school teaches them how to keep healthy, provides appropriate homework and listens to their views at least some of the time. However, a minority do not feel that homework regularly helps them to understand and improve their work, and that the school does not do enough to teach them to be healthy. A large minority of pupils states that behaviour is not good all the time.

Copies of the report

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

Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide copies of the report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the cost of reproduction may be made to others requesting a copy of the report.

The Data report can be found on our website alongside this report.

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Steffan James	Reporting Inspector
Jackie Gapper	Team Inspector
Claire Morgan	Team Inspector
Mererid Stone	Team Inspector
John Thomas	Team Inspector
Rhiannon Boardman	Lay Inspector
Alwyn Thomas	Peer Inspector
Tracey Senchal	Provider nominee

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:

Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court

Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

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