



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

A report on

**Millbank Primary School
Clarke Street
Ely
Cardiff
CF5 5AL**

Date of inspection: February 2019

by

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

About Millbank Primary School

Millbank Primary School is in the Ely area of Cardiff. The school has 248 pupils aged between 3 and 11, including 44 pupils who attend the nursery class on a part-time basis. Pupils are taught in eight classes.

The school's three-year average for pupils eligible for free school meals is around 28%. This is higher than the average for Wales, which is 18%. The school identifies that around 26% of its pupils have additional learning needs, which is above the Welsh average of 21%.

The majority of pupils are of white British ethnicity. Around 20% come from ethnic minority backgrounds and about 11% are learning English as an additional language. No pupils come from homes where Welsh is the first language.

The headteacher took up her post in September 2015. At the time of the inspection, she was seconded to another local school and the deputy headteacher was the acting headteacher. The substantive headteacher returned to the school during the time of the inspection. The school's last inspection was in 2012.

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 make good progress in their learning and achieve well by the end of key stage 2. Nearly all behave very well. They maintain good rates of attendance and are eager to learn.

Teachers plan engaging learning experiences that sustain the interest of pupils well. They make beneficial use of partnerships to enrich pupils' learning and develop their creative skills well. All staff foster strong working relationships with pupils and create a calm and efficient atmosphere in classes. Teaching assistants deliver worthwhile interventions that meet the needs of identified pupils well. Teachers assess pupils' progress in lessons carefully and help pupils to improve their work successfully.

The headteacher provides clear and purposeful leadership. Leaders and governors plan effectively for the strategic development of the school and have secured valuable improvements over recent years.

| 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 pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills
- R2 Ensure that teachers match activities carefully enough to meet the needs of all pupils
- R3 Monitor the progress and impact of planned improvements more closely

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

A majority of pupils enter school with skills that are below the level expected for their age. Most make good progress as they move through the school and achieve well by the end of Year 6.

Most pupils in the foundation phase show good listening skills. They respond to questions appropriately and follow instructions quickly. Most enjoy singing familiar rhymes and songs in English and Welsh. Many pupils talk readily about the activity they are completing. In key stage 2, most pupils listen attentively during lessons, in circle time activities and in assemblies. Most discuss their ideas with partners enthusiastically, for instance, when preparing a Welsh language dialogue for characters using an animation app. They vary their speech according to the purpose appropriately.

Most pupils develop their reading skills effectively as they move through the school. In the nursery and reception classes, most make quick progress in learning letter sounds. They begin to blend sounds together to read and spell common words independently. By Year 2, most pupils use this knowledge to read an increasing range of unfamiliar words successfully. In key stage 2, most pupils read a variety of suitably challenging texts accurately. They show good recall of their reading and scan for information to identify specific facts efficiently. Many pupils are motivated to make progress and enjoy completing online quizzes that test their understanding of what they have read. By Year 6, most pupils use their reading skills confidently across the curriculum.

Most pupils develop well as writers. In Year 1, most hold a pencil correctly and write letters with suitable formation and orientation. By Year 2, most pupils sustain their concentration well during writing activities. For example, they collaborate effectively with a partner to produce a draft newspaper report about the wreck of an alien spaceship they find on the school playground. In key stage 2, most pupils suit the style and content of their writing to the purpose well. For example, Year 5 pupils use a strong persuasive tone to argue for the right of pupils to wear religious symbols with their school uniform. Most pupils plan, draft and edit their writing methodically. For example, Year 3 pupils revise and improve their writing to create detailed historical recounts of the conflict between Queen Boudicca and the invading Roman army. Most pupils organise and punctuate their writing correctly. Overall, the standard of pupils' spelling and handwriting is good.

Across the school, most pupils make good progress in developing their Welsh language skills. In the foundation phase, most pupils respond to a range of simple questions correctly and use an increasing variety of patterns and vocabulary confidently. In key stage 2, most pupils participate readily in Welsh language games during regular 'Capten Cymraeg' activities. Most ask and respond to requests for personal information appropriately. For example, pupils in Year 5 use the past tense correctly to describe what they enjoyed watching on television last night. Most pupils successfully extend their responses using different connectives and a good variety of descriptive vocabulary to express their opinions clearly.

Most pupils develop effective skills in mathematics and use these well in other areas of the curriculum. For example, foundation phase pupils measure debris from a crash site to record evidence using standard units and present data correctly in tally charts and graphs to show pupils' eye colour. In key stage 2, most pupils use their reasoning skills effectively to solve multi-step word problems in a good range of contexts. The most able mathematicians make very good progress and tackle increasingly complex tasks by building thoughtfully on what they already know. For example, in Year 6, they use their understanding of area and perimeter to help them enlarge shapes on a grid by a specific factor accurately.

Across the school, most pupils develop satisfactory skills in ICT. In the foundation phase, a majority of pupils explore specific apps and use them effectively. They control a programmable toy using specific commands to complete a journey. In key stage 2, most pupils collaborate on projects using the Hwb platform. For instance, Year 4 pupils produce a shared presentation about music icons from the 1960s. Overall, however, the range of purposes that pupils use their ICT skills for across the curriculum is limited.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

All pupils feel safe and secure in school. Most pupils are developing well as healthy, confident individuals. They understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle and recognise the importance of making healthy choices when eating and drinking. Most pupils enjoy participating in the good range of after school clubs. A majority of pupils compete successfully in a variety of sporting competitions.

Nearly all pupils know who to turn to when they need support and are confident that adults respond well to any concerns they have. A very few pupils, who find it difficult to manage their emotions, benefit from the sensitive support of staff and the help of other pupils. For example, pupils in the 'Justice League', assist other pupils to resolve problems fairly at lunch and break times. Pupils take this responsibility seriously and show maturity when dealing with issues that arise. Their support is highly valued by others.

Most pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. For example, they explain clearly how to protect their identity online and show an awareness of their digital footprint.

Most pupils enjoy school and are eager to learn. They have positive attitudes to learning and engage well in activities during lessons. Nearly all pupils behave very well in classes and during break and lunch times. They are polite and consistently show courtesy to adults and to one another. Most pupils listen respectfully to what other pupils and teachers say. Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of their rights. They show empathy for the experience and feelings of others and demonstrate tolerance of differing viewpoints. Most pupils are resilient learners and collaborate well. For example, pupils in Year 6 try different approaches, persevere and support each other when they find tasks challenging.

Most pupils are keen to take on worthwhile leadership roles, such as those of the super ambassadors. These pupils met the Children's Commissioner for Wales recently, and are developing other pupils' understanding of their role as citizens, for

example, through supporting events such as International Democracy Day. Pupils participate actively in other pupil voice groups, such as the criw cymraeg and school council. They have a clear sense of purpose and play a valuable role in improving pupils' wellbeing and enhancing the school environment. For example, the school's digital leaders help to develop pupils' understanding of how to stay safe online successfully and the eco council promote recycling across the school effectively.

Pupils' overall attendance compares very well with that in similar schools. Attendance of all groups of pupils has risen steadily over the last three years. There are no persistent absentees and all pupils arrive punctually. Nearly all pupils are keen to attend well and show a strong awareness of the benefits of regular attendance.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The school provides a broad and engaging variety of learning experiences that sustain the interest of most pupils well. Teachers plan appealing topics that provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and skills purposefully. As a result, most pupils build their literacy and numeracy skills progressively and use them successfully in different contexts as they move through the school. For example, pupils in key stage 2 use their mathematical skills to plan routes, calculate distances and compare weather data for different cities as part of their topic work on contrasting localities. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to use their ICT skills across the curriculum.

Teachers plan activities that meet the principles of the foundation phase successfully. They work effectively with teaching assistants to ensure a beneficial balance of adult-led and child-initiated learning. They intervene sensitively and use questioning effectively to extend pupils' thinking and to encourage their independence. As a result, most pupils show motivation in their learning and tackle tasks with enthusiasm, sustaining their concentration well. Teachers provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to explore their learning outdoors. They make efficient use of the attractive outdoor spaces to reinforce pupils' learning and to develop their social and physical skills. For example, they organise resources for Year 1 pupils who help one another to make a nest of leaves and sticks to protect a dragon's egg until its mother's return.

All teachers and teaching assistants foster positive working relationships with pupils. They create a calm and relaxed atmosphere in classes and maintain high expectations for pupils' attitudes to learning. They manage pupils' behaviour well. Many teachers use engaging stimuli to capture pupils' interest at the start of lessons effectively. They make direct links to pupils' previous learning and set clear objectives. However, in a few classes teachers do not match activities precisely enough to meet the needs of all pupils consistently. As a result, a minority of pupils do not always make as much progress as they could.

The school provides valuable additional support for pupils with identified needs. For example, well-trained teaching assistants deliver a variety of focused interventions that support the development of pupils' reading and numeracy skills beneficially. Teachers plan effectively to extend the learning of the most able pupils in mathematics lessons. For example, they provide challenging tasks that stretch

pupils' understanding and require them to make links between different mathematical concepts. The school's participation in a range of cultural events provides purposeful opportunity for pupils to enrich their learning. For instance, Year 6 pupils collaborate successfully to dramatise the story of the poet Hedd Wynn for their successful entry in a competition.

All teachers give useful verbal and written feedback to pupils that identifies strengths and areas for improvement. They provide worthwhile '5 for feedback' sessions that enable pupils to reflect on and improve their work. This process supports pupils to evaluate their progress honestly and to enhance their learning. Teachers make effective use of their assessment of pupils' progress to tailor future learning appropriately.

All teachers and teaching assistants are good role models for spoken and written language. For example, the well-paced teaching of phonics in foundation phase and the use of ambitious vocabulary in a Year 6 writing lesson have a positive impact on pupils' skills and confidence in using language. All staff make frequent use of spoken Welsh for routine instructions, to ask simple questions and to give praise. They do this very naturally and give valuable prominence to the spoken language. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their use of Welsh through lively interactive sessions that motivate pupils to speak confidently. They make relevant links to pupils' topic work to develop their understanding of Welsh heritage and culture. This includes visits to a good range of venues and opportunities to learn about the work of Welsh artists, writers and musicians.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a nurturing community with a strong level of care and co-operation between staff, pupils and parents. The ethos of the school promotes an inclusive environment where everyone shows mutual respect. Teachers and support staff know the pupils very well and provide comprehensively for their social and emotional needs. As a result, most pupils engage confidently in lessons and have high levels of self-esteem.

Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of a range of personal and social issues. For example, Year 4 pupils discuss the benefits of different ways to deal with an imaginary bullying scenario maturely. The school makes very effective use of assemblies to encourage pupils to reflect on moral and spiritual questions. For instance, pupils make thoughtful suggestions about who to help after listening to the story of the Good Samaritan. The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and regular exercise.

The school has clear processes to track and evaluate the progress of individuals and groups of pupils consistently. Staff make purposeful use of information to identify pupils' specific needs. Teaching assistants deliver a valuable range of intervention programmes that address many of these needs successfully. For example, the emotional support provided to the most vulnerable pupils has a positive impact on their personal development and supports their progress in learning well. Staff monitor pupils' progress thoroughly to ensure that individuals and groups of pupils benefit from the range of support provided. The school works effectively with outside agencies and parents to provide specialist support for pupils when needed.

Leaders use robust systems to monitor attendance closely. They set high expectations for pupils' attendance and encourage pupils and families to meet these consistently. This has had a notable impact on securing very good levels of pupils' attendance in recent years.

Parents speak very positively about the school and value the clear lines of communication between school and home. They appreciate the readiness of staff to meet them to discuss any concerns or issues they wish to raise. The school offers a variety of useful workshops and information sessions for parents. These provide families and carers with worthwhile opportunities to learn how to support pupils at home, for example by sharing strategies teachers use to develop pupils' numeracy skills.

Teachers make very effective use of partnerships with local groups and national organisations to enhance the curriculum. These links provide many beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their creativity. For example, pupils work with the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Welsh National Opera on performance projects that help to develop their imagination and self-confidence. Links with schools in China and Kenya strengthen pupils' understanding of their role as global citizens well.

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

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides clear and purposeful leadership. Together with the current acting headteacher, she has established a vision for the school based on a commitment to high standards of wellbeing and pupil achievement. Staff, governors and pupils share high expectations of themselves and work very well together to create a caring and respectful ethos throughout the school. However, leadership roles have changed recently and the acting-headteacher and governors have not defined the new roles and responsibilities of senior leaders clearly.

All members of staff benefit from a broad range of professional learning activities that address school priorities and individual development needs effectively. For example, teachers work with other local schools to research the impact of different teaching methods on the engagement of more able learners. Staff also visit a number of nearby primary schools to observe good practice in collaborative outdoor learning in the foundation phase. The school has robust performance management arrangements that support the professional development and accountability of all staff effectively.

The school responds well to national priorities. For example, improving provision for the expressive arts is a focus for school improvement and the school is developing this area well. The recent Lead Creative School's project provided a valuable opportunity for pupils to use their creative skills purposefully by creating an animation re-telling the history of the local community. This has enabled pupils to collaborate successfully and express themselves creatively.

School leaders use effective systems to evaluate the school's performance. The school's self-evaluation processes use first-hand evidence that provide leaders with an accurate picture of the school's priorities for improvement. The school's development planning identifies clear actions that focus on relevant success criteria. Leaders allocate responsibilities appropriately and target the resources needed to deliver the plan well. As a result, the school has made good progress in raising standards and improving provision in targeted areas. For example, pupils' use of the Welsh language, the standard of pupils' writing and the quality of teaching in the foundation phase have all improved in the last two years. However, leaders do not always monitor the progress of identified priorities closely enough.

Senior leaders and governors manage the school's resources well. They ensure that all pupils have enough equipment to support their learning effectively. There are sufficient teachers and support staff to meet the needs of pupils well. The school environment and displays of pupils' work are attractive and there are inviting spaces both inside and out.

Governors are supportive of the school and have a secure understanding of the school's performance and areas for development. They participate in the first-hand gathering of evidence on the school's performance and contribute purposefully to decisions about priorities for improvement. For example, members of the governing body offer constructive support to the leadership team and provide valuable professional expertise in specific areas of the school's work. The governing body has recently begun to review its own effectiveness so that members are more able to challenge and support the school's leaders rigorously. Governors monitor expenditure prudently to ensure that the school addresses local and national priorities effectively. They review the impact of their spending decisions carefully. For example, they evaluate the impact of the recent improvement to the foundation phase classrooms.

Leaders make effective use of the pupil development grant to improve standards of literacy and numeracy and to provide valuable support for pupils' wellbeing. Purposeful interventions ensure that nearly all of these pupils make good progress from their starting points.

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:

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| 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.

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