



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

A report on

**Southdown Primary School
Linderick Avenue
Buckley
Flintshire
CH7 2NP**

Date of inspection: November 2018

by

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

About Southdown Primary School

Southdown Primary School is in Buckley in Flintshire local authority. There are around 410 pupils on roll, aged from 3 to 11, including 47 nursery pupils who attend on a part-time basis. There are 16 single-age classes in the school, one of which contains pupils from more than one age group for part of the day.

Over the past three years, an average of 15.7% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. This is lower than the national average of 18%.

Nearly all pupils are of white British ethnicity and a very few speak Welsh at home. The school identifies around 16% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is below the national average of 21%. A very few pupils have a statement of educational needs.

The headteacher took up her post in September 2012. The school's last inspection was in September 2011.

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

Southdown Primary School has an inclusive environment where pupils are happy, safe and well cared for. Their behaviour is good in classes and on the playground. Most pupils work hard and are ambitious learners, with many applying their literacy and numeracy skills well across the curriculum. Most develop into responsible members of the school community.

Good quality teaching and an engaging and relevant curriculum combine to ensure that many pupils make good progress, often from low starting points. Pupils who have additional learning needs receive good support.

Leaders and managers know the school well and have clear plans for further improving the school. Staff work effectively as a team. There are plentiful resources of good quality and the school building is attractive and maintained well. The extensive grounds provide valuable scope for pupils to become active, curious and independent learners.

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 Provide greater challenge for pupils that are more able in key stage 2
- R2 Ensure that any written feedback to pupils by teachers is specific enough to help them improve their work
- R3 Improve pupils' reading comprehension at key stage 2
- R4 Develop pupils' ability and confidence to speak in Welsh

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

The majority of pupils enter the school with levels of skills, knowledge and understanding that are lower than expected. By the end of key stage 2, many make good progress and achieve well.

Many pupils develop their English oracy skills well. Although many start school with poorly developed speech, they make strong progress and speak with increasing clarity. A majority in the nursery class listen attentively during circle time and take their turn to speak, such as when they describe a firework display excitedly. In key stage 2, most pupils extend their vocabulary and express opinions clearly. Older pupils speak eloquently when recording presentations on how to become healthy, confident individuals.

Most pupils in the foundation phase build a clear understanding of letters and sounds. Most read at levels that are appropriate to their age and ability. All speak enthusiastically about characters in books and use picture cues to make sensible predictions about what might happen next. In key stage 2, a majority of pupils read aloud competently, and with reasonable fluency. A minority understand well and speak knowledgeably about how storylines develop and characters interact. However, many pupils' comprehension skills are not well developed. A minority are beginning to use higher-order reading skills like inference. However, few pupils use non-fiction books competently to answer specific questions.

Through the school, many pupils develop their handwriting skills well. In the foundation phase, most form their letters carefully with consistent size and spacing. In key stage 2, nearly all pupils take care to present their work neatly. Although much of their writing focuses clearly on developing specific skills, pupils occasionally write independently at length for a variety of purposes. For example, following a walk around the town's history trail, they write detailed recounts that compare modern buildings with their older counterparts. Many pupils use their literacy skills effectively across the curriculum.

In the foundation phase, most pupils develop their mathematical skills well. They write numbers to 1000 in figures and words and show a clear understanding of place value. They measure carefully using standard units and calculate change from £1.00 in their 'Caffi Heulog'. After surveying their classmates' favourite foods, most use tallies to enable them to draw bar charts correctly. Many key stage 2 pupils make good progress in acquiring and applying their numeracy skills. By Year 4, they read, write and order numbers up to 1000 confidently. Pupils that are more able explain how they use their knowledge of factors and multiples to recognise prime numbers. Most pupils apply their numeracy skills well in a variety of contexts across the curriculum. For example, in their entrepreneurial project, they research the cost of materials required to produce 'spy glasses'. They investigate methodically, measuring and calculating accurately when investigating how differently shaped vessels affect the rate of evaporation of their contents.

Most pupils develop a range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills appropriately as they move through the school. Pupils in Year 1 program a moveable toy to make it move around a course. In their topic work, Year 2 pupils open and save their work confidently, scan quick response codes to retrieve information and create bar charts and pictograms correctly. Pupils in Year 4 create lively animations about the legend of Cantre'r Gwaelod. By the end of key stage 2, most use ICT capably across the curriculum. For example, they create scientific line graphs, databases about the Celts and spreadsheets to extract information.

Throughout the school, most pupils have positive attitudes towards the Welsh language. In the nursery, many count to 10 in Welsh and begin to talk about the weather. Older foundation phase pupils use Welsh words for foods, clothes and hobbies correctly. Many pupils in Year 2 write shopping lists and sentences describing themselves. Although most pupils in lower key stage 2 read hesitantly in Welsh, by Year 6, many read more confidently and with secure understanding. Many older pupils write in Welsh in a variety of contexts. For example, they write accounts about their favourite pastimes, letters to pen-friends and their views on the contents of simple books and poems. Pupils in key stage 2 readily exchange pleasantries with visitors and engage in brief conversations. However, many are unable to expand on a small number of well-rehearsed phrases when holding conversations.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Throughout the school, pupils' behaviour in classes and around the school is good. They are polite and well-mannered, and interact positively with their peers and with adults. They welcome visitors to the school confidently, are eager to interact and portray their school in a favourable light.

Nearly all pupils are enthusiastic learners who enjoy coming to school. They work hard in lessons and develop into resilient, independent learners. Many pupils in the foundation phase have positive attitudes to learning and show determination to succeed, which is celebrated in their class 'book of perseverance'. As they progress through the school, many pupils continue to build on their positive attitudes to learning and work hard at their tasks. They approach new challenges confidently and show perseverance when they find work difficult.

Pupils feel safe and secure in school and are confident that any problems will be dealt with promptly and fairly. Those in the foundation phase have a firm awareness of the importance of keeping safe during forest school activities, such as when pupils in Year 1 use secateurs safely to trim branches from a tree. As they move through key stage 2, pupils develop and use successful strategies to maintain a positive and resilient attitude to their work, appreciating that mistakes are a natural part of the learning process. For example, when offered a choice of level of challenge in their mathematics lessons, a majority of pupils in Year 6 choose to accept the more difficult option.

Pupils across the school undertake a variety of responsibilities competently, including working as eCadets, Criw Cymraeg and serving on the eco committee. Members of the school council collect anonymous slips from a worry box then discuss and implement appropriate solutions. For example, they present a 'game show' assembly to show their peers how to deal with bullying.

The atmosphere in classes is calm and respectful. Almost all pupils settle to their work quickly and enthusiastically. They remember previous learning well and ask and answer questions appropriately. They work efficiently with their peers in different settings indoors and outdoors, responding positively to new experiences. For example, they examine a simulated crime scene based on their history topic about invaders, with a sense of purpose.

Nearly all pupils are aware of the importance of healthy eating and drinking and many identify healthy and unhealthy foods correctly. They understand that regular exercise is important and nearly all take part enthusiastically in the daily exercise challenge. As a result of a beneficial link with an Indian school, most pupils took part in a 'Run to India' challenge. This developed their sense of duty to support those less fortunate than them.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs and interests of nearly all pupils well. Teachers enable pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills confidently by accommodating the requirements of the national frameworks for literacy, numeracy and digital competence effectively. They use collaborative and flexible approaches to plan a curriculum that builds progressively on pupils' prior knowledge as they move from one class to the next. In key stage 2, teachers provide pupils with worthwhile opportunities to reflect on the core purposes of the forthcoming curriculum for Wales and these have a positive effect on everyday learning activities. For example, pupils use the principles of the new curriculum confidently to plan their topic work on the Victorians. The school's provision for developing pupils' ICT skills enables most to participate enthusiastically in worthwhile cross curricular activities. For example, teachers in the foundation phase provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their story writing skills by creating lively animations while in key stage 2 they encourage their pupils to develop useful research skills when creating persuasive adverts for their entrepreneurial project.

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about the history and culture of Wales through developing vibrant displays and arranging visits to relevant places of interest in Wales. It has a comprehensive structure for teaching Welsh that enables the progressive development of language patterns for staff to use with pupils. Teachers use this appropriately to provide interesting opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh oracy, reading and writing skills. For example, most pupils in key stage 2 engage positively during oracy activities when recording dialogues. Many staff encourage pupils to speak Welsh outside of specific Welsh lessons. However, they rarely require pupils to enhance their responses.

Positive relationships between pupils and staff support a nurturing environment that enables effective learning. Nearly all teaching assistants provide useful guidance to groups of pupils across the school to help them make progress.

Most teachers and teaching assistants adhere successfully to the foundation phase principles of promoting pupils as active learners. In key stage 2, most teachers plan lessons effectively, enabling nearly all pupils to understand the learning objectives and how to succeed. Nearly all teachers plan a range of stimulating learning

activities that provide appropriate challenge for a majority of pupils. However, the level of challenge provided to pupils that are more able in key stage 2 is inconsistent. Most teachers use skilful questioning that enables pupils to recall previous learning easily. They assess the depth of pupils' understanding and provide them with worthwhile opportunities to suggest ideas about what they would like to learn.

Most teachers make regular checks on pupils' learning, facilitating valuable progress. They provide pupils with helpful verbal feedback that enables them to improve their work confidently. However, teachers' written feedback tends to encourage and congratulate pupils, and is not consistently helpful in indicating the specific next steps for them.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school provides a caring, nurturing environment where all pupils are valued. Well-organised, detailed records enable teachers to monitor the progress of all pupils efficiently. This enables the school to provide effective, tailor-made provision for a wide range of pupil requirements.

Staff identify the requirements of pupils early and implement valuable support for them through suitable intervention programmes that are adapted to meet their individual needs. As a result, all pupils have suitable access to all aspects of the curriculum. Appropriate links with a wide range of external agencies enable the school to deliver highly effective support. Efficient communication links with parents keep them fully informed about their child's progress.

End-of year progress reports are comprehensive and informative, with a meaningful contribution from each child. All pupils identified with additional learning needs have appropriate individual education plans, usually containing specific and measurable targets. These ensure that all pupils know what they need to do to achieve their specific targets.

The school makes appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking. Pupils learn about the impact of lifestyle choices and behaviours through using a broad range of resources and listening to presentations by specialist visitors, such as members of the emergency services. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

There is a positive atmosphere of mutual respect throughout the school. A daily children's international news programme is used successfully to promote an appreciation of cultural diversity. For example, pupils explore the religions and cultures of other countries purposefully. Staff encourage pupils to take on responsibilities by accepting appropriate leadership roles and contributing regularly to decision-making processes. For example, they provide opportunities for a group of pupils to actively promote internet safety within the school and in other school across the local authority. Members of the school council and eco-committee are democratically elected to represent their peer group. These groups actively involve pupils in making decisions about the school, provide opportunities for them to decide on which charities they should support and help them to plan relevant fund-raising activities.

Staff provide pupils with opportunities to learn about and to celebrate their cultural heritage throughout the curriculum and by taking part in the annual school eisteddfod. The school enables pupils to take part in many projects to develop a range of skills such as a creative arts project on tessellation, working with a local artist, and making an audio-visual presentation to their peers. The school ethos and colourful, informative wall displays promote ethical values and wellbeing throughout the school consistently.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides the school with strong, effective leadership. She communicates a clear vision for the school and has high expectations of all staff and pupils. A dedicated team of staff support her well. The school supports the professional development of its staff through establishing an extended leadership team that bolsters the school's leadership capacity. Leaders promote a successful professional learning culture amongst the staff by engaging them to undertake action research into aspects of their areas of responsibility. For example, the science co-ordinator has revised colleagues' approach to investigative work. This proactive approach has contributed successfully to the school's positive track record of securing improvements over time.

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. As a result, the school fosters professional and productive relationships effectively. Regular, informative meetings and informal briefings keep all staff up-to-date with activities across this busy and vibrant school.

The self-evaluation report provides an honest and accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. It is securely based on a broad range of first-hand evidence and links closely with the aims of the school development plan. Many of its targets support national priorities well, such as improving pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT, are useful tools for bringing about improvement, and have a direct impact on the life and work of the school. For example, the school's response to the implementation of the digital competence framework is a particular strength. Other grant-funded plans used to support vulnerable learners meet requirements successfully.

Members of the governing body bring a wide range of relevant skills and expertise to their roles. They provide active support to the school and are fully engaged with its wide-ranging self-evaluation processes. Members of the curriculum committee carry out purposeful activities to inform their knowledge about the work of the school. Consequently, they have a comprehensive awareness of the schools' strategic priorities and understand how they inform and develop good practice. They have a sound understanding of their statutory duties and are beginning to provide robust levels of challenge. For example, subject link-governors ask pertinent questions about the performance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

Arrangements to manage staff performance are comprehensive. All staff have relevant targets that are linked securely to school plans. Leaders undertake a comprehensive and thorough cycle of monitoring activities. They share outcomes of

good practice with colleagues effectively. For instance, the recently introduced approaches to teaching and assessment, such as the new marking strategy, are becoming more consistent across the school.

The headteacher monitors finances diligently and is supported valuably by the school administration assistant and governors. Additional funding, such as the pupil deprivation grant is used efficiently 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 their 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 all pupils.

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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