A report on

Williamstown Primary School
Dinas Isaf West
Tonypandy
RCT
CF40 1AG

Date of inspection: March 2019

by

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

About Williamstown Primary School

Williamstown Primary School is in Tonypandy in the Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority. There are 354 pupils on roll, including 36 full-time nursery pupils. There are six mixed-year classes and six single-year classes. In addition, there are two learning resource classes, providing education for eighteen pupils with communication needs from across the local authority.

The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is about 20%. This is similar to the average for Wales of 18%. The school identifies 46% of pupils as having additional learning needs, which is much higher than the national average of 21%. Nearly all pupils are of white British ethnicity and come from homes where English is the main language. Very few pupils speak Welsh at home.

The current headteacher took up her post in September 2014. The school's previous inspection was in 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

Williamstown Primary School is a happy and caring community, where pupils feel safe and valued. Leaders, governors and staff form a dedicated and hardworking team, who create a positive atmosphere for teaching and learning across the school. The quality of provision to support pupils with communication needs in the learning resource classes is strong.

Most pupils behave well and they have positive attitudes to learning for most of the time. They make generally good progress in speaking, reading and writing in their English lessons and a strong start in developing their Welsh skills in the foundation phase. However, pupils' ability to work independently and to develop their literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills across the curriculum is limited. Consequently, pupils do not always achieve as well as they could.

The headteacher has established a clear vision, which she shares successfully with the whole school community. However, leaders and governors do not always identify the most important issues requiring improvement in teaching and pupils' standards. Where the school has addressed areas for development successfully in the past, leaders have not always ensured that the school has sustained these improvements in the longer term.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	**Adequate and needs improvement**
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	**Adequate and needs improvement**
Teaching and learning experiences	**Adequate and needs improvement**
Care, support and guidance	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Adequate and needs improvement**

Recommendations

R1 Ensure that self-evaluation and improvement planning processes identify and address important areas for development

R2 Ensure that teaching challenges all pupils at an appropriately high level and develops their independent learning skills effectively

R3 Improve provision and pedagogy in the foundation phase

R4 Ensure that the planned curriculum provides effective opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum

R5 Improve pupils' speaking and writing in Welsh in key stage 2

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Most pupils make solid progress in their learning as they move through the school. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils achieve appropriate standards in literacy and numeracy. Pupils who have additional learning needs, including those in the learning resource classes, make steady progress towards their individual targets. However, a minority of pupils do not make as much progress as they could.

In the foundation phase, most pupils share their ideas clearly and confidently. Many nursery pupils speak in full sentences, for example when describing the cat they have created with blocks. Nearly all pupils in the learning resource classes respond appropriately to staff requests and answer questions suitably for their ability. For example, a few describe clearly the possible consequences of touching a sea urchin. Where pupils have a very limited vocabulary, they use pictures successfully to express their wishes. By Year 6, many pupils adapt their speech suitably for different purposes and audiences, for instance when giving a presentation to persuade their peers that unicorns exist. However, a minority of pupils in key stage 2 do not listen carefully enough when other pupils or adults are speaking. They often talk over each other too much when working in groups or answering a question.

Many pupils read books by popular authors with enjoyment and enthusiasm. By the end of the foundation phase, many pupils read with suitable fluency, accuracy and expression. More able pupils use their prior knowledge effectively to infer the meaning of text, while less able pupils often use sounding out and blending successfully, when tackling unfamiliar words. However, pupils in the learning resource class in the foundation phase have limited phonological awareness and this hinders their reading progress. In key stage 2, pupils in the learning resource class self-correct and use visual cues suitably to help them to maintain meaning when reading aloud. By Year 6, many pupils develop competent higher-order reading skills. For instance, they discuss maturely the dilemma of a character leaving a new-born baby at an orphanage in Victorian times. A few also draw comparisons successfully with the decisions characters make in similar circumstances in other books they have read or films they have seen. Most pupils use an appropriate range of reading strategies when researching information for their topic work, for example skimming, scanning and note taking.

Across the school, nearly all pupils have neat handwriting and present their work with pride. Most pupils make good progress in developing their writing skills through the foundation phase. By Year 2, most pupils' writing is of a good standard for their age and ability. Most spell common words correctly and many punctuate their writing accurately. Many write well at length, using a suitable range of sentence starters to organise their ideas successfully. However, very few pupils in Year 2 use an imaginative or wide range of vocabulary. As a result, most pupils' writing does not capture or sustain the reader's interest well enough. In key stage 2, most pupils write successfully in a wide range of genres, such as when producing a discussion text about social media, a story to accompany a short film or a poem based on 'Macbeth'. By Year 6, more able pupils use advanced punctuation, such as colons, apostrophes and brackets with precision, for example when writing a television script for a

gardening programme. Many pupils spell polysyllabic words correctly. However, in general, pupils' ability to redraft and improve their written work is at an early stage of development.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make solid progress in developing their mathematical skills. By Year 2, most have strong number skills and the more able recall multiplication facts for 5s and10s confidently. Most use standard units to measure length accurately, using trundle wheels, tape measures and rulers. In key stage 2, most pupils use a limited range of written methods appropriately to solve word problems. On a few occasions, they apply these skills suitably to real-life situations, such as when purchasing classroom resources and calculating profit and loss from items sold at the school's Christmas fayre. Most pupils check their answers competently using inverse operations and rounding to the nearest 10. However, across the ability range, pupils do not always develop their mathematical skills to a high enough level, especially in problem solving and reasoning.

In general, pupils do not apply their literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills well enough in their work across the curriculum. In key stage 2, pupils rarely apply their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects at the same level as in their mathematics and English lessons.

In the foundation phase, and in the learning resource classes, most pupils show enthusiasm towards the Welsh language. For example, pupils in Year 1 enjoy learning vocabulary linked to their theme of 'Once upon a time'. In Year 2, they read simple books enthusiastically, expressively and with accurate pronunciation, applying their knowledge of phonics appropriately. Many pupils in key stage 2 build on these reading skills suitably, for example when reading a class text about space. However, across the school, very few pupils speak Welsh outside of formal Welsh lessons. They lack confidence in speaking and most pupils are too reliant on prompts and scaffolds. Overall, their writing skills in Welsh are limited.

In the foundation phase, many pupils develop strong information and communication technology (ICT) skills. For example, pupils in Year 1 program a toy around a street plan to deliver letters for 'The Jolly Postman' successfully. They create a stimulating multimedia presentation by adding a background, animating a character and recording audio instructions for how to train a dragon. As they move through key stage 2, pupils develop their ICT skills suitably using a range of communication tools and spreadsheets. Across the school, nearly all pupils are confident in uploading their work to an online platform. However, in key stage 2, pupils' ability to create and interrogate databases is limited.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Most pupils speak confidently and proudly about their school. They appear happy and enjoy coming to school. Most pupils know where to turn if they have any concerns and they appreciate how adults help them. As a result, they feel safe, secure and well cared for. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. In each class, the 'ICT heroes' give valuable guidance to other pupils. For example, they give pupils important information about age restrictions when using social media, and about the dangers of online communication, including offering appropriate advice about what steps to take if they have any worries when using the internet.

Generally, pupils' behaviour in classes is good and most pupils behave well around the school. Most pupils are polite and respectful to each other, staff and visitors. Most pupils co-operate well in paired tasks, for example when creating a Welsh language e-book for younger pupils to learn new vocabulary about sport. However, occasionally, pupils do not collaborate successfully enough when working in groups to complete their tasks.

Many pupils in key stage 2 take on a growing range of leadership roles and responsibilities enthusiastically. For example, the work of the Junior Road Safety Officers is beginning to contribute successfully to raising the awareness of pupils and parents about the importance of road safety in the school car park. The school council has recently produced a newsletter to inform parents of their work, for instance in supporting charities, such as the local food bank. However, a few pupil groups, such as the eco committee and the Criw Cymraeg, have a more limited influence on bringing about change to improve the school.

Many pupils display positive attitudes to learning and settle well to their tasks for most of the time. Most speak confidently about their work and a few pupils discuss current and previous work with enthusiasm. Many pupils enjoy the topics they study and most are generally willing to work hard to succeed. A few pupils persevere well at challenges, such as when making three-dimensional models in design technology and recording information on a spreadsheet. However, in general, too many pupils across the school do not develop their resilience well enough. They struggle to persevere to complete tasks independently and they lose interest in their work too quickly.

Nearly all pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of healthy eating and drinking. Most pupils know fruit and vegetables are an essential part of a healthy diet. They understand that regular exercise is important and many participate actively in a range of sports clubs in school, such as table tennis and the 'Fit for Fun' club.

Many pupils in key stage 2 understand the importance of attending school regularly. However, pupils' attendance over time has declined below the national average and does not compare well with that in other similar schools.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

All staff establish very good working relationships with pupils and they create a positive atmosphere for teaching and learning across the school. Most staff manage pupils' behaviour well. They have good subject knowledge and they use questioning skilfully, for example to develop pupils' understanding of specific mathematical vocabulary in the foundation phase. In many classes, there is a suitable pace to learning and teachers use an appropriate range of teaching approaches to engage pupils. This includes opportunities for pupils to work with partners and in small groups, for example to consider the most appropriate design for a lunar vehicle.

Overall, the quality of teaching and assessment varies too much from class to class. In a minority of classes, where teaching is most effective, teachers enthuse pupils with inspiring 'hooks' and open-ended tasks. For example, older pupils explore profit and loss for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). In these

classes, teachers have high expectations of pupils and they meet individual pupils' needs effectively. However, in a majority of classes, the challenge for all pupils is not always high enough. Consequently, not all pupils develop their literacy, numeracy and thinking skills as well as they could.

Nearly all teachers deploy learning support assistants suitably. They offer valuable support to groups and individuals, for example by intervening at appropriate times to provide useful feedback to pupils about their work. However, in the foundation phase, staff do not have a secure enough understanding of how to support pupils' independent learning. As a result, there are too few purposeful opportunities for pupils to lead their own learning or to consolidate and apply their skills through well-planned continuous and enhanced provision. Staff do not always ensure that pupils make good enough use of the outdoor areas. In key stage 2, most pupils do not contribute to choosing topics that interest them and too many activities rely heavily on direct input from the teacher. Consequently, a minority of pupils, particularly boys, lose focus and interest in their learning at times.

Teachers' use of assessment for learning strategies is developing suitably, including peer and self-assessment. In nearly all classes, teachers share clear learning objectives purposefully with pupils. They use success criteria appropriately with younger pupils, and older pupils construct their own success criteria with support from the teacher. This helps pupils to have a good understanding of how to be successful in their work. As a result, they review their progress with developing confidence, particularly in key stage 2. Most teachers identify what pupils do well and give praise for pupils' efforts in their written comments. In a few instances, teachers pose helpful questions for pupils to consider in taking forward the next steps in their learning. However, a minority do not provide feedback that focuses clearly enough on helping pupils to improve their work.

The curriculum provides a suitable range of learning experiences for most pupils. In general, these build appropriately on pupils' prior knowledge and there is sound provision to develop pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and number. However, the school's current arrangements for grouping pupils across classes in key stage 2 mean that less able pupils do not always experience a curriculum that is broad and balanced and that challenges them sufficiently.

In response to the digital competence framework, teachers have produced useful plans to develop pupils' ICT skills appropriately over time. As a result, pupils' digital skills are developing well in the foundation phase. However, the school does not currently have a coherent whole-school approach to curriculum planning for literacy and numeracy. As a result, teachers are not always able to ensure that lessons build systematically on pupils' previous achievements. In addition, teachers do not plan enough purposeful opportunities for pupils to extend and apply their literacy and numeracy skills effectively in a range of relevant contexts in other subjects across the curriculum.

Many staff promote the Welsh language well through their teaching. For example, teachers in the learning resource classes use a wide range of vocabulary, such as the names of sea creatures, when introducing a topic to pupils. However, in key stage 2, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their communication skills. Consequently, pupils do not retain and use language patterns well enough and they lack confidence in using spoken Welsh and in writing.

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about the history and culture of Wales. For example, pupils have studied the role of prominent women in the local community in campaigning for the right to vote. There are beneficial visits to places of interest that link well to pupils' topics, such as to the Rhondda Heritage Park, the Senedd in Cardiff and the Bristol Aerospace Centre.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has a caring and supportive ethos. All staff provide strong support for pupils with social and emotional needs to help them to engage positively in school life. For example, staff are alert to any changes in pupils' wellbeing and they respond perceptively to individual needs at an early stage. As a result, most pupils feel safe and secure in school. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

The school tracks and analyses information on pupils' progress appropriately. Teachers identify pupils with additional learning needs effectively through a wide range of assessments. They put suitable intervention programmes in place to meet pupils' individual needs. They review the impact of these on pupils' basic skills and wellbeing regularly with pupils and their parents. Teachers monitor how well pupils develop their skills in English and mathematics in their own classes, but the systems to track pupils' literacy and numeracy skills as they move through the school are underdeveloped. This limits the evidence that leaders and teachers can draw on to judge how well pupils are making progress and whether they are learning to their full potential.

The learning resource classes provide a beneficial, nurturing environment for pupils. Staff work effectively with parents and specialist services to plan successfully to meet the needs of pupils. For example, staff use 'person-centred planning' approaches successfully to involve pupils in their learning and in setting their own targets. This has helped pupils with social and communication needs to begin to take greater responsibility for their learning

The school has strong relationships with parents. They speak highly of the warm 'family' atmosphere at the school and most have confidence in the ability of leaders to resolve any issues or concerns they raise about their children. The school's communication with parents is effective. For example, it uses a digital messaging service and social media to inform parents about current news and events. In addition, staff in the learning resource classes use an online communication tool effectively to share information quickly with parents. This is particularly helpful for those families who do not live within the school's catchment area. Parents appreciate the workshops and presentations staff provide on the curriculum and other relevant issues, such as e-safety.

Following the last inspection, the school implemented a range of suitable strategies to improve pupils' attendance, such as incentives for pupils and issuing parents with fixed penalty notices. These strategies had a positive effect on pupils' attendance initially, but they have not been successful in sustaining improvements over time.

Arrangements to provide healthy eating and drinking and the importance of taking regular exercise are effective. Older pupils run a popular healthy fruit tuck shop and

the school provides a range of extra-curricular activities to promote physical activity well. They use experts from the community successfully to lead these groups, for example a Welsh national coach runs the table tennis club. The weekly 'Family Fit' sessions promote family enjoyment of physical fitness effectively, which many pupils and their families attend and enjoy.

The school provides appropriate opportunities for older pupils to take on responsibilities and to become involved in decision-making. For instance, the Junior Road Safety Officers have become active citizens, helping leaders to monitor pupil safety in the school car park and speaking to parents about traffic safety issues. However, there are currently no opportunities for foundation phase pupils to take on whole-school roles and responsibilities.

There are a few suitable opportunities to develop pupils' awareness of sustainable issues, for example through participation in a community-wide recycling scheme and, recently, through an initiative to encourage parents to donate unwanted uniform. However, provision to develop pupils' understanding of cultural diversity is at an early stage of development.

The school helps pupils to develop a good understanding of social issues, such as gender equality, through community-based projects. As a result, pupils have a strong understanding of how women in the locality fought for the right to vote. Governors visit the school regularly to lead worship and pupils participate in Remembrance Day services. These experiences help to support pupils' spiritual development suitably. The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to engage with the creative arts. For example, theatre groups visit the school regularly to perform plays and operas. Peripatetic teachers and a school governor support pupils successfully to learn how to play musical instruments. As a result, pupils' performance skills develop well and this helps to raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which focuses on ensuring that pupils have high standards of wellbeing. She communicates this vision well to everyone involved with the school. All staff are committed to providing the best care and support for pupils. They understand and respond sensitively to the social and emotional needs of individual pupils and place this at the centre of their work.

There is a strong team ethos in the school and staff work together effectively to share expertise and to support each other with aspects of teaching linked to national priorities in education. For example, members of staff train others in developing their ICT skills and help them to improve their use of Welsh. Senior leaders encourage and support all staff to take on leadership roles and to develop their leadership skills. They identify beneficial opportunities for staff to shadow senior leaders to enhance their understanding of their roles.

The deputy headteacher provides the headteacher with valuable support. She takes a lead role in implementing whole-school initiatives and trialling new ways of planning and teaching. Senior leaders make appropriate use of performance management arrangements to address whole-school priorities, such as developing the school's

approach to curriculum reform and improving outcomes for pupils in their basic skills, such as reading and spelling. There are many valuable opportunities for staff to develop professionally. For instance, they engage purposefully with other schools, for example in sharing their involvement in a local history project and explaining how the school has been preparing for additional learning needs reforms. However, where leaders identify effective practice within the school, they do not always ensure that all staff implement this consistently across the school to improve pupils' standards and the quality of provision.

Leaders take appropriate account of the views of parents and pupils when reviewing the school's performance. They make suitable use of a range of first-hand evidence, such as learning walks, lesson observations, work scrutiny and listening to learners, to monitor the school's work. However, the outcomes of these monitoring activities are not sharp enough to identify important areas for improvement, for example in Welsh or in the application of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. On occasions, leaders identify appropriate areas for improvement, such as developing pupils' independence, and improving the quality of their extended writing across the curriculum through reducing the use of worksheets. However, they do not follow these up rigorously enough to bring about the required improvements.

When planning for improvement, senior leaders do not consider well enough aspects of teaching and learning that require attention. Following the previous inspection, leaders addressed the school's recommendations swiftly. For example, they improved attendance and assessment for learning. However, they have not sustained these improvements well enough over time and they continue to be areas for development.

Governors support the school well. They receive detailed information about aspects of leadership, provision and pupils' standards in termly headteacher reports. They take an active interest in the school's work and visit regularly. Recently, they have taken part in learning walks to observe the school at work. This is at an early stage of development and currently their reports do not feed into the school's self-evaluation processes. A few governors are beginning to look at the progress that pupils make over time, but their role in providing effective challenge about the standards that pupils achieve is limited.

School leaders and governors monitor finances diligently. Leaders plan effective use of additional funding, such as the pupil development grant, to provide valuable support for pupils' emotional needs and to support the language skills of younger 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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