



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

A report on

**Bedwas Infant School
St Mary's Street
Bedwas
CF83 8EE**

Date of inspection: January 2020

by

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

About Bedwas Infant School

Bedwas Infant School is in the former mining village of Bedwas near Caerphilly. The school has 162 pupils between the ages of three and seven, including 43 part-time pupils in the nursery. There are four full-time and four part-time teachers at the school. There are four classes at the school.

The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is around 16%, which is slightly lower than the national average of 18%. Most pupils are from a white British background. The school has identified around 26% of its pupils as having special educational needs, which is slightly above the national average of 21%.

The headteacher took up her post in January 2016. The school was last inspected in May 2014.

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

Senior leaders provide a strong strategic direction for the school with a clear focus on meeting the diverse needs and wellbeing of all pupils. The school has a strong culture of continuous review and planning for improvement. Team work is a strength of the school. The governing body is highly supportive of the school.

Nearly all pupils' attitude towards learning is exemplary. Standards of behaviour and self-discipline in lessons and around the school are high. Pupils are polite and considerate, and they relate very well to each other.

The quality of teaching supports very high levels of pupils' engagement and very strong progress in learning. Teachers and assistants work highly effectively as a team and create an enthusiastic learning environment in all classes. They have very high expectations of each pupil.

Learning experiences meet the needs of pupils of all abilities well. Teachers ensure that there is clear progression and continuity in pupils' learning skills as they move through the school. As a result, nearly all pupils including those with additional learning needs make good and often very good progress in the development of their literacy and numeracy skills by the end of Year 2, sometimes from low starting-points.

The quality of care, support and guidance provided is excellent and has a very positive effect on pupils' standards and wellbeing. The school's highly effective work in engaging with families is excellent. It ensures that the school is a valued part of the local community and is very successful in creating a team ethos among staff, pupils and parents.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Excellent
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Excellent
Leadership and management	Excellent

Recommendations

- R1 Improve consistency in handwriting and the presentation of pupils' work
- R2 Ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to respond to teachers' comments in order to extend and challenge themselves

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in partnership with parents to improve pupils' wellbeing for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

On entry to the school, most pupils' literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills are below those expected for pupils of their age. However, nearly all pupils including those with special educational needs make good and often very good progress in the development of these skills by the end of Year 2. Most achieve very well in line with their age and ability.

Nearly all pupils across the school develop their oracy skills well. They listen carefully to each other and to adults. As they move through the school, most pupils become highly confident speakers who express themselves very clearly. Older pupils, for example, talk enthusiastically and use a wide vocabulary when talking about their interests and their topic 'Making Our World Better'.

Across the school, nearly all pupils develop their reading skills successfully. Younger pupils talk enthusiastically about the books that they enjoy. They correctly identify the title and handle books well as a reader. The majority of older pupils are beginning to read with confidence and expression. They use a range of strategies to decipher words they are not familiar with including the effective use of letter sounds. Many can explain how to use books to research and find information in non-fiction texts and when using the internet. More able pupils read fluently, using punctuation well to read expressively. They recall in detail what they have read and predict how the story will end. They have a wide vocabulary which enables them to understand increasingly challenging texts. Most pupils use their reading skills effectively to support their work across the curriculum.

Most pupils develop their writing skills well. Younger pupils confidently communicate meaning through simple words and phrases, for example, when writing about autumn and describing Bonfire Night. Most older pupils use simple sentences to record their ideas well in a variety of genres, for example, when writing a poem or a recipe. Most include basic punctuation such as capital letters and full stops correctly, for instance when they write a diary recount of their visit to the locality. More able pupils use similes very effectively to describe a lion and a rainbow. They use adventurous vocabulary when, for example, they write an animal poem. However, the standard of handwriting and presentation is inconsistent across the school.

Across the school, most pupils have very positive attitudes to Welsh and make good progress in learning the language. They respond positively to instructions and display a good understanding of the Welsh used by staff. They sing songs with good pronunciation and tone in lessons and during collective worship. Many are becoming increasingly confident to use Welsh in informal situations. By Year 2, many develop a good understanding of simple Welsh texts and they answer basic questions about them correctly. Most pupils are developing strong knowledge and understanding of the culture and heritage of Wales.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their mathematical and numeracy skills as they move through the school and apply them purposefully in a range of learning areas. Most Year 1 pupils show good recall of previous learning about

two-dimensional shapes and use the correct mathematical language to describe curved and straight sides. As they move through the school, most pupils develop their reasoning skills in line with their age and stage of development. They apply their numeracy skills well in class topic work. For example, younger pupils use simple diagrams to sort animals and older pupils create data tables and bar graphs correctly of their favourite party treats. They use measuring and calculation skills effectively, for instance when designing and building a replica village from cardboard.

Most pupils develop their information and communications technology skills (ICT) effectively. By the end of Year 2, they make good progress and use a suitable range of devices confidently to support their learning. These include tablet devices, laptops, desktop computers, as well as programmable toys. For example, in the nursery, younger pupils confidently manoeuvre small robotic toys to knock Humpty off the wall. In Year 1, pupils use modelling skills well to drag and drop two-dimensional shapes into a repeating pattern. Across the school, nearly all pupils use child-friendly search engines to inform their work across the wider curriculum. For example, groups of older pupils find out about endangered animals, researching where they live and what they eat. More able pupils collaborate very well with older pupils from a partner school to extend their media and coding skills as they create new games for friends to play.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Pupil wellbeing is an outstanding feature of the school. Nearly all pupils feel happy and safe at school. They enjoy coming to school and receiving a welcome at the gate each day from the headteacher and caretaker. The pupils know who to approach and show great maturity if they have a problem by asking other pupils before seeking the help of adults. Nearly all pupils feel very positive about their experiences in school. They are very proud of their school and their many achievements and are very enthusiastic to talk about their work.

Nearly all pupils demonstrate outstanding attitudes to learning. They show curiosity, perception and imagination and participate eagerly in a wide range of interesting learning opportunities. Nearly all pupils co-operate extremely effectively and persevere with their tasks for extended periods. This helps to ensure that nearly all pupils apply themselves well to their tasks, concentrate for extended periods and show clear motivation to succeed.

Nearly all pupils' behaviour is exemplary around the school, in lessons and in other activities. For example, during break times pupils play games with each other in a friendly and supportive way. Older pupils play sensitively with younger pupils showing much care and consideration for the needs of others. They take turns maturely and celebrate each other's successes. This is an excellent feature of the school's daily life.

Nearly all pupils are very polite and welcoming to visitors, adults and other pupils. They play co-operatively with one another and work well together on tasks in large and small groups, and in pairs. Pupils across the school enjoy their challenges and take their targets for improvement seriously. As a result, pupils from a very young age have a very secure understanding of how well they are doing.

Most pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy by eating a balanced diet and drinking water. They bring in healthy lunch boxes and enjoy fruit snacks at break time. In the summer months, they grow potatoes and cook them for others to enjoy. Most pupils have a very good understanding of how to keep safe online.

Pupils take on a wide range of additional responsibilities enthusiastically and carry out these duties well. Pupils enjoy taking on the roles of Helpwr Heddiw to encourage others to speak Welsh and 'Digi-Bug Helper' for support with ICT. The school council takes an active part in school life and is very proud of improving the school for others. For instance, members have developed writing resources for those pupils who prefer to write or draw at lunchtime. The eco-council works hard on raising other pupils' awareness of looking after their environment by organising recycling and energy saving activities such as turning off lights and taps.

All pupils in reception class develop their social and emotional wellbeing when a baby is brought into school. They learn how babies develop over time. All the pupils' respond to this learning experience in an exceptionally positive way and showed great sensitivity during the experience. Singing in whole school assembly using sign language develops a very strong empathy with hearing impaired children. As a result of training alongside staff and governors many pupils have a good understanding of autism.

Pupils describe enthusiastically the opportunities they have every Wednesday when it's a 'no-pens' day. Older pupils describe how proud they are to work with younger pupils on a range of practical activities such as food technology, expressive arts and science.

Across the school, most pupils have a voice in what they learn and gain a suitable range of skills that help them to develop into independent learners. For example, most pupils in Year 2 work with enthusiasm on a range of tasks about endangered species. They focus on the plight of the orangutan and show a very good understanding of the ethical issues around rainforest conservation. They understand and undertake their responsibilities seriously as global citizens.

Pupils talk very positively about their experience of working with their parents in family support groups. They enjoy discussing and recording with their parents for example, what it is they like, what they believe others think of them and describe what they think they need to practice. This makes them more confident and happier in their learning and better able to cope with the demands of the school day.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Staff establish an exceptional working relationship with pupils, which fosters successful learning. Teachers and support staff have high expectations of all pupils and their teaching and questions to pupils are challenging and purposeful. This helps to ensure that nearly all pupils apply themselves well to their tasks, concentrate for extended periods and show clear motivation to succeed. Teachers and support staff work effectively as a team and provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop their listening, speaking and thinking skills. All members of staff promote the regular use of Welsh successfully.

Teachers ensure good levels of continuity and progression in pupils' learning. They provide learning experiences that build well on pupils' existing skills, knowledge and understanding. This supports good rates of pupil progress in lessons and over time. The curriculum consists of topics and interesting and imaginative learning experiences. Teachers consider pupils' ideas when planning learning experiences. At the start of each topic, pupils' state what they already know and what they would like to learn, and at the end of the study period, they explain how successful they have been in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. This stimulates their interest well and develops their skills and curiosity towards learning skilfully, and strengthens their commitment to their work successfully.

Teachers and support staff implement the principles of foundation phase education consistently. They nurture pupils' independence and develop their communication, numeracy and ICT skills well. Effective focused tasks and enhanced learning activities include beneficial opportunities for pupils to investigate and role-play, for example when running a café in the garden centre. Pupils receive regular opportunities to engage with stimulating learning experiences in the outdoors.

Teachers provide pupils with clear and frequent oral feedback, which helps them to understand what to do and how to improve their work. Pupils are very confident to ask for help if required. There are good examples of purposeful written feedback, and teachers' comments respond to individual targets. However, pupils are not regularly encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to improve their work in subsequent lessons by responding to the constructive comments that teachers make.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school is an exceptionally caring, nurturing and inclusive community that ensures that all pupils feel safe, secure and happy. Staff know their pupils very well. They ensure that pupils with social, emotional or specific learning needs receive very effective and sensitive support. This helps pupils to engage well with their learning. This is a particular strength at the school.

The school has a very effective procedure to track and monitor pupils' progress and wellbeing. Staff identify pupils' strengths and needs through rigorous assessment procedures. This ensures that teachers identify pupils that need in-class, small group or one-to-one support very quickly. The school has an attractive and comfortable 'Cwtch' area, where staff provide targeted support in a quiet setting. All pupils with special educational needs have a clear development plan, which includes specific, measurable and challenging targets. Support assistants and volunteers provide and implement a range of effective intervention programmes deftly and skilfully. This approach enables pupils to participate fully in all of the school's learning and extra-curricular activities and make very good progress against their targets. The school works very well with parents and out of school agencies to produce and monitor pupils' individual plans. This has a very positive effect on pupils' progress.

High quality, well-organised nurture groups provide highly effective and sensitive sessions for vulnerable pupils to discuss their feelings at difficult times. A notable feature of the school's work is that all pupils have access to very effective support by school staff and external agencies to help them with their emotional and social

development. The activities enable pupils to talk about their feelings in small, supportive groups. This improves their confidence and readiness to learn.

The school provides numerous opportunities for pupils to play an active part in decision-making and to undertake leadership roles. It places great store on developing learners that are responsible citizens.

The school's highly effective work in engaging with families is excellent. It ensures that the school is a valued part of the local community and is very successful in creating a team ethos among staff, pupils and parents. Staff ensure that both children and parents play a very positive role in developing school improvement through a wide range of family engagement strategies. For example, regular 'Bring a Parent Afternoon' sessions are very well attended and have enabled pupils and families to share learning time together. This practice has been recognised by local and national organisations as being very effective in promoting the importance of home school relationships. This partnership has had a positive impact on the social and emotional wellbeing of pupils and their families.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very successfully by providing stimulating work, through classroom activities and acts of collective worship. Staff ensure that pupils develop a sound understanding of the school's core values. This is evident in the gentle way in which the school offers valuable guidance to pupils to foster good behaviour. Pupils' friendly behaviour towards each other provides further evidence of the success of this caring support.

There are appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking through assemblies and class activities. The school promotes the benefits of healthy lunchbox boxes successfully. Additional opportunities such as cookery classes and growing fresh vegetables and fruit in the school garden reinforce important messages about the value of a healthy diet.

The school actively encourages pupils to use their imagination and to engage with the creative arts through their studies, extra-curricular activities and educational visits. For example, a visit to Caerphilly Castle inspired pupils to produce colourful artwork. There are many purposeful opportunities for pupils to participate in the arts, sport and recreation. These include, for example, football, coding and art and craft clubs. These all have a very positive impact on pupils' personal and social development and engagement in all aspects of school life.

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

Leadership and management: Excellent

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide outstanding and imaginative leadership, and set a clear strategic direction for the school's work and its continuous improvement. They have very high expectations and are very passionate about the community that they serve. They are highly effective in setting and promoting the school's values. These values underpin the daily life to the extent that pupils talk knowledgeably about them and explain enthusiastically the difference that they make to their lives.

The headteacher promotes teamwork effectively. There are excellent arrangements to distribute responsibilities and to develop staff expertise. As a result, there are high levels of collaboration within a culture that aspires for continuous improvement. Staff share practice confidently, undertake leadership roles diligently and respond very enthusiastically to any initiatives to raise pupils' standards. For example, all staff implement wellbeing and mindfulness strategies well. This supports pupils to develop essential learning skills and to engage positively with new experiences.

The school has robust performance management arrangements, and successful training opportunities support the process well. Nearly all members of staff benefit from broad range of professional development activities that meet school's priorities and their personal aspirations effectively. The strong focus on professional learning reflects the high priority the school places on developing the skills of all staff. For example, staff and governors, as well as all of the pupils, have received training to improve their understanding of autism and to learn from one another.

The school takes full advantage of opportunities to collaborate with other schools and organisations. This partnership work is highly effective in improving provision for pupils. For example, the school has led projects to develop staff and pupils' creativity. The school works proactively to share and develop good practice, for example in using the environment to raise pupils' aspirations and to improve outcomes for vulnerable learners. Staff's enthusiasm in ensuring the wellbeing of pupils is exemplary.

The headteacher and staff approach change and opportunities for improvement positively. They work collaboratively and confidently in response to national priorities. For example, there is a strong and sustained focus on encouraging learners to attain good standards of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Teachers have worked exceptionally well to develop a creative curriculum that captures pupils' interests and imagination. They have supported this work by agreeing shared approaches to teaching that place a prominent emphasis on ensuring that pupils play an active part in their own learning. As a result, nearly all pupils are keen to complete tasks, take pride in their work and take ownership of it.

The school has a strong culture of continuous improvement. Monitoring arrangements are effective. Leaders consider a broad range of first-hand evidence including the views of pupils and parents to help them to identify strengths and areas for further improvement. Improvement work has a consistent and effective focus on raising pupils' standards, for example recent improvement work has secured notable improvements to boys' progress in recent years.

The governing body is highly supportive of the school. Many governors undertake monitoring activities that enable them to engage fully in discussion, particularly about pupils' wellbeing. This ensures that governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, enabling them to challenge the school successfully to improve standards and ensure provision of high quality.

Leaders manage and monitor expenditure carefully and allocate funding prudently to maintain and improve standards. A very good supply of resources that meet pupils' needs well. The school makes effective use of the pupil development grant to meet the needs of pupils eligible for free school meals. Vulnerable pupils benefit from a

wide range of support activities that develop their literacy and numeracy skills successfully. They plan very effectively to reduce the effect of poverty on pupils' standards and wellbeing.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' wellbeing, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

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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