



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

A report on

Georgetown C.P. School

**Oakfield Road
Tredegar
Blaenau Gwent
NP22 4LJ**

Date of inspection: June 2022

by

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

About Georgetown C.P. School

Name of provider	Georgetown C.P. School
Local authority	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	464
Pupils of statutory school age	329
Number in nursery classes	74
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 21.3%)</i>	14.4%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 22.2%)</i>	10.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	3.6%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	1.5%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	06/06/2022
The percentage of pupils currently eligible for free school meals is 19.0%.	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website:
mylocalschool.gov.wales

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- (a) The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Georgetown Community Primary School is a happy school, where staff, governors, parents and pupils all work together to create a safe and stimulating environment for learning. Pupils' well-being is at the heart of the school's work. Leaders have been very successful in improving the indoor and outdoor spaces to support pupils' emotional and social needs, as well as their physical skills, which are very good. This has been particularly important following the pandemic.

Through exciting learning activities, staff often engage and inspire pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding well. Teachers make good use of the local area to help pupils to learn about their heritage, to think about issues that affect their community and to prepare them for the world of work. Most pupils make strong progress in listening, speaking and numeracy, including those who are vulnerable and have additional learning needs. From a young age, they become chatty, independent learners who collaborate well and take care of each other. By the time they leave Year 6, nearly all pupils have outstanding digital skills that support their learning across the curriculum. Their writing, however, is underdeveloped.

The headteacher and her deputy provide strong leadership for the school. They work together effectively, providing support and guidance to staff and parents through a time of great change and challenge in schools. There is a strong culture of trust within the school community. Parents know that leaders and governors make decisions in the best interests of their children. The current leadership team is fairly new but it has identified most of the important areas of the school's work that it needs to improve. This includes how teachers and pupils use assessment effectively to move learning forward. In general, the school's improvement processes do not focus precisely enough on identifying what impact its actions have had on pupils' progress and skills' development.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that self-evaluation processes identify the aspects of teaching and learning most in need of development, and focus precisely on the difference actions make to pupils' progress and skills
- R2 Improve older pupils' standards of writing
- R3 Improve teachers' understanding of effective classroom assessment, including feedback, so that they can evaluate pupils' progress, and identify how best to support their next steps in learning

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 relation to how it has developed the indoor and outdoor environment to improve pupils' well-being and learning, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at Georgetown Primary School, many pupils, including the vulnerable and those with additional learning needs, thrive. They make strong progress in learning from their starting points, particularly in developing their speaking, digital and physical skills. Since returning to school following the disruption of the pandemic, pupils' development and application of their knowledge, understanding and skills across most areas of the curriculum is progressing well.

A few pupils start school with lower-than-expected communication skills and relatively poor personal and social skills. Due to the exceptional quality of the provision offered to the youngest children, most quickly become independent, as staff engage them in active play and learning experiences that inspire them. For example, they concentrate for a long time when cutting up a fish to explore its texture and when making sandwiches for a picnic. They are curious to explore their environment and staff react effectively to their changing interests.

By reception, most pupils instigate conversations with friends and adults, expressing their likes and their wonder at events, such as when a very important person came to visit for the school's recent Jubilee celebrations. As pupils move through the school, their listening and speaking skills improve very well. Nearly all express themselves confidently, and they clearly articulate their enjoyment of school. By the time they reach Year 6, many discuss challenging ethical issues maturely. They present strong opinions but agree or disagree respectfully with other pupils' views. Nearly all pupils greet people in Welsh confidently. They are proud of their heritage and many pupils across the school enjoy and participate eagerly in Welsh lessons. In the younger years, they make strong progress in the development of their communication skills in Welsh. For example, many pupils in Year 2 provide extended responses to a wide range of questions. However, the pandemic has hampered the confidence of a minority of older pupils and they struggle to sustain a conversation.

Overall, younger pupils' reading skills develop well. Nursery and reception pupils show an interest in books and enjoy listening to stories, joining in enthusiastically with rhymes and actions. By Year 1, many acquire a good understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds, and how sounds combine to form words. As pupils move through the school, they read with increasing fluency and understanding, although a minority of older pupils do not develop an effective range of strategies to support their reading of challenging words and texts. This hinders their ability to infer or deduce meaning when reading independently.

From a young age, most pupils show enthusiasm for writing when experimenting with mark making. They go on to write well, expressing their ideas with increasing freedom and independence. Older pupils develop a sound understanding of the characteristics of different genres and apply this knowledge appropriately in their work across the curriculum, for example to write arguments for and against keeping animals in zoos as part of their topic work. However, older pupils' writing often lacks craft, and for many, their written work does not reflect the quality of their spoken language. As a result, their ability to extend their ideas when writing for different

purposes, to redraft their work to improve its quality, and to use a range of punctuation, is underdeveloped. Due to the pandemic, a minority of pupils' spelling skills are not secure, and staff have recognised the need to improve these. Pupils' presentation of their work is variable and does not always show the pride they have in their learning.

Most pupils develop strong mathematical skills and apply these well to problem-solving in authentic learning contexts. For example, Year 2 pupils use containers to measure capacity accurately to the nearest 25 millilitres, when investigating how the amount of water in a bottle affects the pitch of the sound it makes when they blow into it. In Year 3, pupils use number skills competently to re-calculate the cost of buying items from a sandwich bar menu, when prices are reduced. By the time pupils reach the end of their time in the school, most apply their well-developed numeracy skills confidently in a range of creative situations. For instance, Year 6, pupils use bearings to track the route of a stranger washed up on a fictional island, using a computer-generated three-dimensional environment they have developed themselves.

By Year 6, pupils' digital skills are a strength. From an early age, they use digital cameras to record their learning experiences. Younger pupils log into mobile devices and access a range of programs independently to support their learning. Older pupils create databases, write simple codes to program a robot and use 'green screen' technology to create high-quality multi-media presentations linked to their topic work. Year 6 pupils apply their knowledge of software development to create an innovative 'app' about their local area. They use their digital skills ably to track where people are making downloads of this across the world.

Nearly all pupils develop their physical skills very well. Young pupils develop their hand-to-eye coordination, fine motor skills and balance effectively. They ride two and three-wheeled vehicles and climb using hand grips and foot holds confidently. Older pupils move nimbly and show controlled coordination, such as the Year 4 pupils who are able to side step at speed, and repeatedly bend to pick up, move and place down cones from one point to another during an outdoor game.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils in Georgetown are proud of their school. They feel safe and valued, and enjoy a strong sense of belonging. This helps them to develop as confident individuals who, from a young age, care for each other. Nearly all pupils are chatty, welcoming and courteous. They are confident and keen to share their learning experiences with visitors. Pupils trust leaders and staff to do their best for them and they appreciate the experiences and support they provide. Following the disruption to their learning caused by the pandemic, most pupils have successfully adapted to school life again.

Pupils are comfortable to share their thoughts and feelings with adults in the many supportive well-being spaces the school has created. Many pupils use the cleverly adapted spaces in their classrooms for individual reflection time, which has a positive impact on their well-being. Younger children engage well with the readily available resources that help them with specific concerns. Older children talk positively about how the recently developed class gardens create opportunities for high-quality collaborative work, as well as quiet time, which benefits their emotional and physical

health. Pupils enthusiastically discuss the well-being opportunities that teachers provide, such as small group support, where they learn about positive relationships and how to manage their feelings. They also enjoy listening to the school's popular radio station during break and lunchtimes, while they relax in the outdoors.

Pupils relish the varied opportunities to undertake a range of leadership roles that allow them to tackle issues that affect their community and influence school decisions. For example, the 'Heddlu Bach' pupil group works closely with local police officers to monitor traffic and parking where pupils cross the road between the school's two sites. Pupils remind drivers of how they should behave to keep pedestrians safe and provide valuable updates for parents and governors. Notably, the pupil council has strongly influenced the development of the school's behaviour policy. Pupils have a mature understanding of its value in supporting the school rules, rewards and sanctions that they have developed themselves. Because of this high level of ownership, most pupils' behaviour across the school is excellent. This has a positive effect on their ability to engage and concentrate on their learning. Pupils understand their rights and feel strongly about fairness and equity.

There is an overwhelming feeling of positivity towards learning in the school and most pupils engage enthusiastically with their tasks. Nearly all pupils have well-developed independent learning skills. They sustain concentration from an early age and focus well when completing tasks alone or collaboratively. Although older pupils make occasional improvements to their work during lessons, for example to correct spellings or punctuation, they do not have a secure enough understanding of their next steps in learning.

Older pupils develop their creative and entrepreneurial skills exceptionally well as part of exciting business projects where they design, produce and sell highly professional items to the public. As well as developing their knowledge of the world of work, this has a positive impact on pupils' team working and budget management skills. Most pupils are confident individuals who participate keenly in the extra-curricular sports activities that the school has recently re-introduced. They enjoy making healthy meals and drinks as part of their curriculum experiences. Nearly all make healthy choices at snack and lunchtimes, explaining why a balanced diet is important. Most pupils have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has established appropriate mixed-phase teams to consider how best to provide pupils with stimulating learning experiences across the areas of learning and experience as it introduces a Curriculum for Wales. This whole-school approach to planning has improved teachers' understanding of curriculum design and informed their collaboration with local schools about how best to progress pupils' skills and behaviours for learning. To broaden pupils' interests, develop their wider skills and support them towards meeting the four curriculum purposes, staff, parents and pupils

have identified ten common learning opportunities that every pupil should experience in Georgetown.

The school has worked highly successfully to develop the learning environment and support the provision for skills through authentic learning experiences. Staff use outdoor areas for younger children very effectively to stimulate pupils' engagement in their learning. For instance, the youngest pupils develop skills in collaboration and problem-solving as they recreate their own beach in the outdoors. Throughout the school, staff maximise the use of indoor spaces to promote pupil learning. For example, they use corridor space to create a role play doctor's surgery and provide breakout areas for pupils to work independently, with access to a wide range of useful resources that help them to develop their digital and communication skills.

Teachers' use of immersion days at the start of each curriculum topic has been a valuable tool in engaging pupils in their learning and developing a wide range of skills. For instance, after meeting with local employers, Year 5 pupils set up their own business to create and sell scented wax melts. This real-life context was effective in developing pupils' cross-curricular skills, as well as the skills of creativity, innovation, planning and organising, that underpin the four purposes. In addition, staff use visits successfully to support pupils' understanding of different areas of learning and experience, as well as the development of their entrepreneurial skills. After visiting the nearby cenotaph as part of their humanities topic, older pupils successfully applied for funding to create their own Georgetown World War One memorial garden, which is highly valued by the local community.

The school provides well-planned opportunities for pupils to develop their listening, speaking and numeracy skills in meaningful contexts across the curriculum. These build coherently on pupils' existing knowledge and skills. Provision for the development of their digital skills is particularly strong. For instance, older pupils have developed apps combining digital and literacy skills successfully to provide information on the history of the local area. The school has made positive steps in improving the teaching of reading so that pupils decode words accurately and read with expression and fluency. In general, provision for the development of pupils' advanced reading skills, and the creation of a culture of reading for enjoyment, is at an earlier stage of development. Currently, planning for the teaching of writing does not ensure that pupils develop their skills well enough.

Teachers use daily Welsh language lessons and informal situations to promote the benefits of being multilingual to pupils. In the best instances, Welsh lessons help pupils to become secure in using language patterns to talk about themselves. Teachers in Key Stage 2 recognise that pupils' confidence has diminished as a result of the pandemic and are taking suitable steps to consolidate previous language learning.

Nearly all teachers and support staff manage pupils' behaviour very well. All staff show care and respect for pupils which has a positive impact on their wellbeing and engagement in learning. In most cases, there is a clear focus for pupils' learning. Pupils benefit from the strong subject knowledge that most teachers have and, in a few instances, staff develop pupils' knowledge and understanding particularly well. For example, older pupils learn about acids and bases, and apply this knowledge as part of a challenge to create invisible ink within an imaginative scenario linked to a

picture book they are reading. Most staff make effective use of questioning to promote pupils' thinking and reasoning skills, such as when discussing the challenging issues of migration, xenophobia and human rights as part of their cross-curricular work. When pupils need extra help, they often benefit from learning assistants' high-quality support. However, teachers do not always plan to meet the needs of all pupils well enough. This means, on occasions, activities are either too easy or difficult for pupils, and this limits the progress that they make.

Teachers provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to use success criteria to assess their own and others' work. They use suitable methods to provide feedback to pupils on their day-to-day learning and, in the best examples, they offer useful guidance on how pupils can improve the quality of their work. However, too often feedback does not focus well enough on helping pupils to move forward in their learning. Opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback are inconsistent and, as a result, pupils are unclear about their next steps.

Care, support and guidance

The quality of care, support and guidance of pupils is a strength of the school. It adapted sensitively to varying circumstances throughout the pandemic to provide highly effective support for children and their families. There remains a strong emphasis on securing high levels of well-being for pupils since their return to school, with leaders prioritising support for their emotional and physical health as part of the school's strategic plans.

There is high-quality provision to support pupils' social and emotional well-being. For instance, staff have developed calm spaces and support areas in classrooms and around the school, to help children experiencing personal challenges. They understand each pupil's needs and individual circumstances well. Skilful learning assistants use a range of well-designed intervention activities to provide effective enhanced support to meet pupils' needs. Teachers and leaders track the progress of these pupils effectively to ensure they engage successfully in all aspects of school life. The school has developed a specialist programme which provides outstanding support for young carers, allowing them time to support each other, while engaging in fun, enrichment activities that develop their confidence and resilience.

From a very early age pupils are taught how to make healthy food choices. They benefit from extensive opportunities to discuss healthy eating, handle fruit and vegetables, and prepare their own meals as part of carefully planned authentic learning experiences. The school's canteen staff take pride in the nutritious, well-balanced lunches they provide. Pupils have excellent opportunities to develop their physical skills. This includes younger children being able to access a wide range of apparatus to improve their balance, movement and co-ordination. Extra-curricular after-school and lunchtime clubs, including choir, basketball, mindfulness and photography, successfully enable pupils to develop a wide range of skills.

There are many opportunities for pupils to influence their own learning and to make decisions about the school's work. For example, teachers ask pupils to think about aspects of learning they would like to investigate further. Staff encourage parents to discuss these ideas with their children and invite them to share their own suggestions for pupils' topic work too. The pupil leadership groups make valuable contributions to

school improvement planning and help to review the school's progress. They provide purposeful feedback about recent initiatives in whole-school assemblies and present regular updates for governors on their work. Most recently, pupils led the organisation of celebrations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and organised fundraising events for people affected by the war in Ukraine. This helps to develop all pupils' awareness of world events and supports them to become good citizens, who have empathy and are compassionate towards others.

The school's provision for developing pupils' understanding of Welsh heritage and culture is good. For instance, pupils create expressive art work linked to local places of interest, such as Bedwellty House. They carry out interesting research about the Cholera Cemetery in nearby Cefn Golau and consider the pioneering work of Aneurin Bevan, in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic. This helps them to reflect on the impact significant events and people, in the past and present, have had on their community. During daily acts of collective worship, staff provide pupils with valuable opportunities to think about the values that are important to them and how they apply them in their everyday actions and words. They share carefully-chosen children's books to explore issues of diversity and inclusion with pupils, which help to broaden their understanding of the needs and rights of others.

The school has effective strategies to identify and respond to pupils' additional learning needs. The additional learning needs co-ordinator and staff work closely with pupils and their parents to agree precise learning targets and match learning resources carefully to pupils' individual needs. There are rigorous systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress as they move through the school. Where appropriate, the school liaises well with specialist external agencies to provide effective support for pupils and their families.

There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Pupils and parents report that incidents of bullying are rare but, when they do occur, leaders and staff take swift action and resolve issues appropriately. The school monitors pupils' attendance effectively and systems to support and challenge low attendance are robust.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which prioritises pupils' well-being and achievement, to help all be successful in life. Working closely with her deputy, they provide effective and supportive leadership. The strong professional relationships between all staff help to create a happy school for pupils and their families. During the pandemic, leaders set clear expectations for the school community and established systems that supported the continuity of pupils' learning well and helped them to cope with any challenges that affected them. Communication and individualised practical support for families is very effective. Parents speak highly of the commitment leaders and staff have shown to helping them and their children during this difficult time. The partnership between the school and parents is a considerable strength.

Leaders model well the professional values and behaviours that contribute positively to effective collaboration among staff and to developing a whole-school culture of self-improvement. They support the professional learning of all staff effectively to ensure they have an increasingly positive influence on the school's work. For

example, in small teams, staff participate in research-based inquiry to consider further developments in teaching, linked to one of the school's priorities for improvement. Most recently, this has had a positive impact on pupils' learning in mathematics.

The school's professional learning website provides a wealth of useful information to help staff to audit their practice in line with the professional teaching standards, to reflect on their progress and to seek out their own professional learning opportunities. Leaders ensure that all staff, including supply teachers, are very well supported in following their personal career goals. For example, learning support assistants pursue relevant higher qualifications through employment-based study routes and aspiring leaders have opportunities to take on additional responsibilities, as part of the school's flexible leadership structure.

There is a varied calendar of self-evaluation activities that provide leaders with first-hand evidence about the school's work. This secure understanding of the school's strengths and most of its areas for development has helped leaders to improve important aspects of the school, such as the indoor and outdoor learning environment. This has had a notable impact on pupils' well-being and their communication, physical and independent learning skills. The school gathers the opinions of a wide range of stakeholders as part of its approach to self-evaluation and improvement. Since the headteacher's appointment, all staff are involved in monitoring activities. This ensures that everyone feels part of the improvement process. Staff work together well in curriculum teams to review what they have achieved and to consider where and how further developments to provision can be made. However, monitoring and review processes often focus too heavily on aspects of compliance, rather than identifying the impact actions have on pupils' learning, progress and skills' development. In a few cases, the school's evaluations are overly positive and do not identify the areas in greatest need of improvement, for example standards of writing in Key Stage 2.

Governors are supportive, experienced and knowledgeable about the school's work. Prior to the pandemic, they gathered first-hand evidence through activities, such as listening to learners and learning walks, to help them fulfil their role as critical friends. In place of this, they use 'showcase events', where staff and pupils present their recent work to them, online. This enables governors to question pupils and staff about the school's progress towards its improvement goals, including national priorities such as a Curriculum for Wales.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances well. They monitor expenditure closely and balance short-term and longer-term needs appropriately. They ensure that the pupil development grant is used effectively to benefit eligible pupils, for example by employing skilful support staff that deliver high-quality well-being support. Leaders and governors ensure that the school has robust safeguarding arrangements and they work successfully with the local authority to mitigate risks through careful risk assessment and control measures, for instance by managing safe routes for pupils moving between the school's two sites. Governors ensure that arrangements to promote pupils' healthy eating and drinking are highly effective.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer 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/carers 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' well-being, 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)

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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