



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

**A report on**

**Bishopston Comprehensive School  
The Glebe  
Bishopston  
SA3 3JP**

**Date of inspection: December 2017**

**by**

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

## About Bishopston Comprehensive School

Bishopston Comprehensive School is an English-medium 11 to 16 mixed comprehensive school situated towards the west of Swansea. There are 1,105 pupils on roll compared with 1,096 pupils when the school was last inspected in April 2013.

Nearly 7% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is much lower than the national average of 17%.

Most pupils speak English as their first language and most come from a white British background. Very few pupils speak Welsh as their first language.

The school's intake includes the full range of ability. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is 20.5%, which is just below the national average of 21.5%. Just over 4% of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is higher than the national average of 2%. The school hosts a local authority specialist resource for pupils with speech, communication and language difficulties. In addition, the majority of pupils that attend the resource base have a diagnosis of autism.

The headteacher has been in post since 2015, after having been acting headteacher from 2014. The senior leadership team consists of a deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher, an inclusion manager, a senior teacher, a school business manager and a marketing and information and communication technology manager. All the senior team were in the school at the time of the last inspection, but none in their current leadership positions.

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

Leaders at Bishopston Comprehensive School have established an ethos whereby pupils develop outstanding social, learning and life skills. Learning experiences meet the needs of pupils exceptionally well and teaching supports pupils to reach high standards. The school plans imaginatively and proficiently to develop pupils' skills. There is a strong culture of professional learning, and staff demonstrate a willingness to embrace new ideas and strive for continuous improvement in whole-school development, in the curriculum, and in their teaching. As a result, most pupils make very strong progress, and achieve consistently high results at key stage 4.

<b>Inspection area</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Standards</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Wellbeing and attitudes to learning</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Teaching and learning experiences</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Care, support and guidance</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

## **Recommendations**

R1 Refine improvement planning processes to focus more precisely on specific areas for development

## **What happens next**

The school will draw up an action plan that shows how it is going to maintain high standards and quality of provision and address the recommendations.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to developing pupils' social, learning and life skills for dissemination on Estyn's website.

## Main findings

### Standards: Excellent

In lessons and over time, most pupils make very strong progress. Many pupils have a secure recall of previous learning and assimilate this with new information to deepen their understanding. For example, in geography pupils build on what they have previously learned about tourism in Goa to develop a comprehensive understanding of eco-tourism in Borneo. Many pupils develop their analytical and investigative skills well in a wide range of different contexts. They approach problem-solving tasks with confidence, justifying their responses with clear explanations and making thoughtful connections to other areas of learning. For example, in 'Skills week', Year 8 pupils collect and analyse evidence to support or oppose the development of the Swansea Lagoon.

Most pupils listen attentively to one another and to their teachers. Many are articulate and speak with confidence. They make well-considered contributions to class discussion. A minority of pupils ask perceptive questions of their teacher and their peers to develop their own and each other's understanding.

Most pupils read effectively using a range of sources to extract and organise relevant information. They evaluate a variety of texts to develop skills of inference and deduction well. Most pupils show a measured appreciation of writers' choices of language, form and style. For example, in year 9 pupils examine a controversial piece by Jeremy Clarkson to identify rhetorical features and their effect successfully. A few pupils read particularly well and this enables them to make convincing links between texts and with their own writing. Many pupils have well-developed note-taking skills, which they use to analyse both written texts and video clips.

Most pupils write at length for a variety of purposes. They edit and redraft their work to refine their writing successfully. Many write with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar, and use a wide range of vocabulary. They structure their writing well to present creative pieces and well-reasoned arguments, for example when evaluating the important causes of the civil war. Many pupils present their work neatly and with pride.

Most pupils apply their numeracy successfully to enhance their learning in appropriate subjects. For example, in history, pupils use databases to analyse information about the death toll on the Titanic, comparing the survival rates according to class and gender.

Many pupils develop worthwhile skills in information and communication technology (ICT). They apply and practise these skills in a suitable range of contexts, for example when using relevant programming language to design a multiple-choice quiz, or when producing computer-aided engineering designs.

As a result of the strong progress made by pupils over time, at the end of key stage 4 performance is consistently well above that of similar schools. The more able do exceptionally well. In many subjects, a high proportion of pupils achieve the highest grades at GCSE. Boys, girls and pupils eligible for free school meals perform better than these groups of pupils in similar schools in many indicators. Those with additional learning needs achieve well.

At key stage 4, the performance of pupils in Welsh second language is consistently well above national averages. In lessons, many pupils make good progress in developing their Welsh language skills. They have a secure grasp on basic spelling and grammar. They have accurate pronunciation and are confident speakers.

At the end of Year 11, nearly all pupils either continue their education in a school or further education college.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent**

Nearly all pupils demonstrate high levels of wellbeing. This has an extremely positive impact on the standards they achieve and on their personal development. As they progress through the school, most pupils become ambitious, capable and independent learners.

Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They take an active part in lessons and are enthusiastic learners. Most are able to work independently for sustained periods, and engage willingly with new experiences and tasks. Many pupils display particularly high levels of perseverance in their learning, especially when they are engaged in challenging activities. Most pupils work well together in pairs and groups, listening carefully to the ideas of others as well as expressing their own views clearly and coherently.

Most pupils behave in an exemplary manner in lessons and around the school. They are courteous and polite to others. They respond maturely to adults and engage confidently in discussion about moral and ethical issues and current affairs. Most pupils feel safe in school. They are confident that staff will deal well with any issues that arise and know whom to approach if they have any concerns.

Pupils contribute maturely to inform aspects of the school's work through the school council and a range of other activities, such as providing feedback to subject departments suggesting improvements to learning experiences.

Many pupils understand the need for a healthy lifestyle and the importance of an appropriate diet in achieving this. A very high proportion of pupils take part in sporting activities provided in the school's extra-curricular programme. Many pupils develop their social and emotional skills well through participation in a wide range of charity and community work, raising large sums of money and an awareness of important issues locally and across the world. They have a good understanding of what it means to be a global citizen through projects such as the Red Café, where they learn about sustainability and how to create strong community links.

Many pupils develop strong leadership skills and high levels of self-confidence. They apply these attributes successfully in a wide range of contexts such as acting as prefects, mentors or tutors for younger pupils, training teachers in ICT skills, or coaching sport in partner primary schools.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Excellent**

Overall, the quality of teaching is excellent.

Nearly all teachers have strong subject knowledge, which they use effectively to motivate and engage their classes. They have extremely positive working relationships with, and the highest expectations of, pupils. They manage pupils' behaviour positively and sensitively. These teachers celebrate pupils' effort, progress and achievement in lessons well and many display particular enthusiasm for their subject and learning, and this inspires pupils to achieve high standards.

Most teachers plan lessons for progression effectively. They identify goals for pupils' progress that underpin well-designed, relevant and challenging learning activities. They explain complex concepts proficiently, provide clear instructions and are strong language models. Teachers are exacting in their expectations of pupils' use of subject specific and technical vocabulary and this is reflected in the quality of pupils' spoken language.

Many teachers create interesting, attractive and stimulating resources to encourage pupils to practise their skills, develop their thinking and explore ideas creatively. They frequently use demonstration and exemplification of excellent work for pupils, which nurture high expectations. Many teachers have a detailed knowledge of individual pupils' needs and use this insight to adapt learning tasks and resources sensitively to support and challenge pupils of all abilities. Where appropriate, teaching assistants provide valuable support to pupils' learning.

Many teachers focus effectively on developing pupils' literacy skills through a rich range of reading and writing tasks. Many teachers provide pupils with opportunities to work independently on these skills. This has a positive impact on pupils' progress in class and in their homework.

A very few lessons are over directed by the teacher. In these lessons, the pace of learning is either too fast or too slow. This hinders pupils' engagement and does not allow them to make sufficient progress in their skills, knowledge and understanding.

Many teachers question skilfully in order to develop pupils' thinking and to identify gaps in knowledge and understanding. Most provide pupils with frequent, clear and specific feedback which contributes significantly to improving the quality of pupils' work. There is a robust focus on pupils' technical accuracy in their marking, and this impacts positively upon pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar through their self-correction. Most teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback and improve their own work. However, in a very few instances, in lessons or in written feedback, teachers do not provide pupils with precise enough success criteria to help them to evaluate and improve their work.

The curriculum is highly effective in meeting the needs of individual pupils across both key stages. This contributes successfully to the engagement of pupils in lessons, to excellent outcomes and pupil wellbeing. In particular, there is a strong emphasis on catering for the needs of each pupil at key stage 4. The school provides a diverse and beneficial range of academic and vocational qualifications. A particular example of the school responding to individual needs is the opportunity for pupils to gain additional qualifications such as Latin and photography to extend their learning experiences.

The school creates imaginative schemes of work and enrichment projects that provide engaging opportunities for pupils to develop and extend their skills. The 'skills weeks' and 'challenge days' in key stage 3 provide a strong foundation for pupils' learning at key stage 4. These activities provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop independence, creativity and risk-taking.

The school offers an extensive range of enrichment activities for high numbers of pupils to gain valuable experiences to support their learning. For example, art students have worthwhile opportunities to work with local jewellers and set designers, and computing and ICT students work in partnership with a local university to develop coding skills. These opportunities inspire pupils and prepare them particularly well for further education and future employment.

There is highly effective planning for progression in literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. This has resulted in many pupils showing exceptional confidence, a mature ability to articulate their opinions, and provides them with the tools to explore challenging subjects. The school has comprehensive provision to support all pupils who require further literacy and numeracy intervention. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills and the school is making good progress towards implementing the digital competency framework.

Provision for developing the Welsh language, ethos and culture is well co-ordinated. The Welsh language and culture are celebrated, and given prominence across the curriculum. Activities include well-attended residential trips to Glanllyn, the Welsh concert for the community to celebrate the successes of the school Eisteddfod winners and the popular 'Shwmae' day.

### **Care, support and guidance: Excellent**

The school is highly successful in maintaining a caring and inclusive ethos. Pupils receive care, support and guidance of high quality. The school makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

A culture of high expectations and respect for others pervades all of the school's work. This impacts very positively on pupils' wellbeing and the progress they make in their learning and personal development.

The carefully planned personal and social education programme is very effective in supporting pupils' wellbeing and in developing personal and social skills. Pupils learn to respect the values and beliefs of others and many develop particularly high levels of self-confidence. The school encourages pupils' active involvement in the life of the school and the wider community successfully. There are extensive opportunities to develop pupils' skills through participation in the school council and other pupil-led policy groups, acting as mentors or tutors for younger pupils, or volunteering to lead activities in the local community. This is extremely effective in fostering many pupils' decision-making skills and self-esteem.

The school actively encourages pupils to make healthy lifestyle choices and there is suitable provision for supporting pupils' healthy eating and drinking. Many pupils take advantage of the extensive opportunities provided to take regular physical exercise through the wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities. The school



makes particularly strong provision for pupils' cultural development in art, music and drama lessons and in an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, for example in art, fashion and musical groups, and the school's dramatic and musical productions.

Highly effective transition planning with primary schools enables Year 7 pupils to settle quickly when they join the school. The school provides valuable support and guidance for pupils making important decisions at the end of key stages 3 and 4. This is highly effective in ensuring pupils have suitable aspirations and preparing them for further education, employment or training.

There is a comprehensive system to monitor pupils' academic progress and wellbeing. The school uses this extremely well to celebrate achievement with pupils and parents as well as to identify any underperformance or barriers to learning. This enables the school to intervene promptly to meet the needs of individual pupils. Written reports to parents provide detailed information on progress and effort in each subject, and include meaningful subject-related targets for improvement.

Pupils with additional learning needs receive effective support, both in the local authority specialist resource that is hosted by the school and in mainstream classes. Pupils in the specialist resource are integrated very well into all aspects of the life and work of the school and staff work productively with parents and outside agencies to provide appropriate support for them. Individual development plans provide beneficial targets for all pupils with additional learning needs and give subject teachers valuable advice on how to meet their needs. However, the school does not monitor progress against the targets in the individual plans rigorously enough.

The school has successful strategies and procedures for improving attendance and promoting good behaviour and self-discipline. These include a range of rewards and sanctions that pupils understand well. The consistent implementation of these procedures by staff contributes significantly to the good levels of attendance and high standards of behaviour demonstrated by pupils across the school.

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

### **Leadership and management: Excellent**

Leadership at all levels contributes particularly successfully to the strong sense of community and commitment to the school's values and aims. This has had a sustained impact on the high-quality provision, the outstanding standards pupils achieve and their exceptional levels of wellbeing.

The headteacher provides motivating and thoughtful leadership. Together with the senior leadership team, he has established an empowering collegiate and collaborative environment. The school's mission to create 'an outstanding learning community founded upon mutual respect' is evident in all aspects of its life and work.

There are effective lines of communication across the school. Roles and responsibilities for all staff are set out clearly. Leaders have high expectations of what all members of the school community can achieve.

Senior leaders delegate responsibilities effectively. This has helped to empower members of staff, who feel valued and trusted. There are beneficial staff development opportunities, for example as coordinators of strategic priorities or through working in partnership with other providers. Many staff contribute enthusiastically to the work of a broad range of committees. These include the bilingual, standards, curriculum and assessment and quality assurance committees. Through their involvement in such groups, these staff have valuable opportunities to lead particular initiatives, such as the 'Bridging the Gap' strategy, and to promote improvement in other key areas of the school's work.

There are systematic line management arrangements. Meetings between curriculum leaders and their line managers focus directly on pupils' performance and on key aspects of provision. They provide an effective means of supporting these leaders in their work while also holding them to account where appropriate. Performance management arrangements contribute well to promoting the implementation of specific school priorities and to supporting the professional development of individual staff.

The governing body provides an effective overview of all areas of the school's work. It contributes fully to determining the school's strategic direction and priorities, and regularly monitors progress with the school improvement plan. Governors are well informed and have a secure understanding of key performance indicators. The governing body provides clear support and an appropriate degree of challenge to the headteacher and staff.

The school has well-established arrangements to quality assure all areas of its work. A broad range of quality assurance activities includes a systematic programme of lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work, as well as regular consultation with pupils and parents. Senior and middle leaders analyse performance data thoroughly. The school self-evaluation report is detailed and accurate. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement within the school.

The school improvement plan identifies clear priorities and addresses these areas for improvement well. The plan includes suitably ambitious targets, clear, measurable objectives and appropriate actions to support improvement. However, the school and many departmental plans do not focus consistently enough on improving specific aspects of teaching and the development of pupils' skills.

There is a strong culture of continuous improvement, which impacts significantly on the work of the school. Staff take part in an extensive range of professional learning opportunities. These also include bespoke training for associate staff, for example to support pupils with dyslexia, or to use Braille and sign language appropriately. Senior leaders have identified excellent practice well and have developed beneficial opportunities to share this practice within the school and more widely. Many staff are involved in valuable partnerships with other providers and external agencies that support their professional practice well. A few teachers work as lead practitioners to develop and improve practice in specific areas of the curriculum within the school and across the region. The development of these highly effective curriculum and professional learning communities has contributed significantly to improving the quality of provision and to the high standards that pupils achieve.

The school uses its resources effectively to create an engaging and vibrant learning environment. The well-qualified and experienced staff provide high quality teaching and pastoral support. The headteacher, business manager and finance committee monitor school finances and resources robustly. Funding is allocated appropriately to agreed priorities such as the recent acquisition of two synthetic sports pitches, and investment in attractive and informative skills booklets. The school has been successful in achieving efficiencies and reducing staffing costs by refining the leadership structure and delegating responsibilities more widely. It has introduced helpful strategies to boost income, for example through greater community use of school facilities.

Leaders use specific grants such as the Pupil Development Grant effectively to strengthen provision and improve outcomes for particular groups of pupils, including those eligible for free school meals.

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

<b>Excellent</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>	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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