



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

A report on

**Griffithstown Primary
Florence Place
Griffithstown
Pontypool
Torfaen
NP4 5DN**

Date of inspection: February 2019

by

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

About Griffithstown Primary

Griffithstown Primary School is in the village of Griffithstown near Pontypool in Torfaen. At the time of the inspection, there were 389 pupils on roll, including 42 pupils who attend part-time in the nursery. The school organises its pupils into seven single-age and five mixed-age classes, plus the nursery.

An average of around 19% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is very close to the national average of 18%. Approximately 10% of pupils have additional learning needs. This is around half of the national average of 21%. A very few pupils come from an ethnic minority background or have English as an additional language. A very few pupils speak Welsh at home.

Estyn last inspected the school in May 2014. The headteacher took up his post in April 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

Griffithstown Primary School is a happy and caring learning community. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and participate in lessons eagerly. Many pupils develop mathematical and science skills well as they move through the school. However, they are less successful in developing their Welsh language and ICT skills.

Staff and teachers care for pupils well. They develop positive working relationships and help pupils to feel confident in the school environment. Many teachers plan and deliver interesting learning experiences that engage pupils enthusiastically. However, they do not always support pupils who need extra help to learn well enough.

Leaders succeed in creating an inclusive community for all pupils. All members of staff work well as a team and have a clear understanding of their roles. Members of the governing body work diligently and are supportive of the school's work. Leaders focus purposefully on developing a professional learning community for staff, but do not concentrate their actions well enough on monitoring and improving pupils' standards and progress.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Address the issues of site safety identified at the time of the inspection
- R2 Improve standards in Welsh and ICT
- R3 Improve processes for identifying and supporting those pupils who need extra help to make effective progress, particularly in reading and writing
- R4 Improve assessment processes and ensure that teachers use this information effectively to challenge and support all pupils
- R5 Ensure that improvement processes focus rigorously on evaluating and improving pupils' standards and progress

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

Many pupils enter the school with literacy and numeracy skills around those expected for their age. During their time at the school, a majority of pupils progress well and achieve good standards in many areas. However, a majority of pupils who are less able do not always make effective enough progress. Pupils who are eligible for free school meals do not always progress as strongly as they could.

In the foundation phase, most pupils listen to adults and follow instructions well. Many younger pupils talk confidently about what they are doing during independent activities. For example, when dressing up as super girl in the nursery, one pupil notes that 'I am helping my friends and saving the world'. By the end of key stage 2, many older pupils use an extended vocabulary and discuss their ideas clearly when talking about their work. For example, they reason carefully why people might buy a product if a celebrity endorses it.

By the end of the foundation phase, a majority of pupils read suitable texts with accuracy and fluency. They explain the main points of the books they read and what it is they like about it. However, a minority struggle to read simple texts at a level expected for their age. They do not have a strong enough grasp of strategies, such as how to blend letter sounds, to help them decode texts. By Year 6, a majority of pupils read successfully. They recognise the techniques that authors use to add meaning to text and recognise when punctuation should alter the way they read texts aloud. For example, they emphasise words and phrases with exclamation marks confidently. However, a minority of pupils do not read accurately enough and do not recognise or correct errors that they make when reading aloud. A minority do not develop effective higher order skills, such as the ability to scan texts when searching for main points and information.

Across the school, a majority of pupils develop their writing skills well. By Year 2, a majority are beginning to organise their writing effectively and write confidently for a range of purposes, such as writing poems about fireworks and diary entries. At the end of key stage 2, a majority of pupils write detailed accounts on a topic or theme, for example when writing about deforestation. They use paragraphs accurately and make interesting language choices, such as describing snow as 'crystallised white icing'. However, across the school a minority of pupils do not spell accurately or use basic punctuation, such as capital letters and full stops, well enough. Most pupils use their literacy skills to a similar standard when working across the curriculum.

Many pupils develop a beneficial understanding of mathematical concepts and use these confidently in their learning activities. In the foundation phase, younger pupils identify correctly which of a group of stones is heaviest using a balance scale and cubes to work out the weight of each stone. By Year 2, many pupils complete repeating patterns independently and accurately. In Year 4 and Year 5, many pupils use their problem solving skills confidently to work out which number would come next in a given sequence. They explain the methods they use clearly using mathematical language. By Year 6, many pupils apply their understanding of ratios to real-life situations, calculating the number of adults needed to take pupils on a

school trip. In general, many pupils apply their numeracy skills well across the curriculum.

Across the school, many pupils develop appropriate skills in information and communication technology (ICT). In the foundation phase many pupils use tablet computers to support their learning suitably, for example to control a screen character to move in a set direction. Many pupils in key stage 2 use the internet confidently for research and present their information. They use presentation software well to make a presentation on subjects such as seed dispersal and Victory in Europe day. However, a minority of pupils are not confident to access their own accounts, store or retrieve their work independently. Their knowledge, understanding and confidence when using spreadsheets and databases are not developed strongly enough.

Most pupils have a positive attitude towards learning Welsh and make suitable progress in developing their Welsh language skills. Pupils in the foundation phase respond well to a limited range of instructions and can ask and answer a few simple questions suitably. By Year 6, many pupils ask questions and answer appropriately when talking about themselves. They share their likes and dislikes confidently. However, across the school, pupils do not develop their Welsh language skills well enough. They are not able to sustain a simple conversation in Welsh, read simple texts or write at a suitable level.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils' attitudes to school and to learning are positive. They undertake new challenges confidently and understand that they learn from making mistakes. Many talk confidently about not being worried when they get 'stuck'. Most pupils are ready to learn at the beginning of lessons and demonstrate good levels of concentration and perseverance when completing tasks. They collaborate effectively, for example when working in groups to plan what the main character in their story should do next.

Nearly all pupils feel safe and are happy in school. Most pupils have a good understanding of their rights following their engagement in a rights respecting initiative. For example, they understand that they have the right to feel safe. They know whom to go to if they need help or if they are worried. They are polite and are eager to interact with visitors. Nearly all behave well in lessons and around the school.

Most pupils understand well the importance of being active and living a healthy lifestyle. Many are enthusiastic about taking part in physical and outdoor activities. For example, pupils understand that attending activities, such as swimming and dance, supports them to be physically healthy. Most pupils understand the need to make healthy choices. They reflect on the need to have a balanced diet and recognise that breakfast club, healthy school lunches and the fruit tuck shop positively influence their eating habits.

Across the school, pupils take on roles and responsibilities successfully, such as the junior road safety group and eco-committee. These pupils work diligently and actively promote initiatives, such as recycling. They demonstrate a clear understanding of their role in helping to shape their school community.

Most pupils talk with a clear understanding about the importance of high aspirations for the future. They speak confidently that learning in science and technology will help support this goal. As a result, most pupils' engagement in science activities is strong. Many pupils understand how to be safe on-line, supported well by the work of pupils who are digital leaders.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

All teachers develop positive working relationships with pupils and this ensures that most pupils are happy to try new activities confidently. Many teachers consider carefully ways to interest pupils at the start of lessons, for example by using engaging videos effectively. They question pupils thoughtfully and recap previous learning well to help pupils to understand the purpose of lessons. In a majority of classes, teachers deploy learning support staff purposefully. However, in too many cases, teachers do not adapt activities well enough to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those pupils that need more help. As a result, these pupils do not benefit consistently well from their learning activities.

In most classes, teachers use a few simple strategies to help them monitor whether pupils have understood tasks and explanations, for example by asking pupils to give them a thumbs up or thumbs down. In a few lessons, they provide pupils with success criteria and this ensures that pupils have a useful checklist to guide their work. Pupils receive a few useful opportunities to consider the quality of their own or their peers work and to make suitable improvements. However, teachers do not use or develop these strategies consistently or well enough. As a result, the majority of pupils do not have a strong enough understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.

The school has comprehensive plans in place to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum. For example, the school's planned writing journey successfully develops many pupils' understanding of how to write in a range of extended forms. Mathematics planning builds systematically on pupils' skills. For example, in the nursery a practical weighing activity develops most pupils' understanding of mathematical terms effectively, while in Year 6 pupils calculate fractions of weight in relation to rationing during the Second World War. Planning for the development of science skills is effective and this allows most pupils to make good progress in this curriculum area. However, across the school, planned learning experiences in religious education are limited and opportunities for pupils to develop knowledge and skills in this area are underdeveloped.

Foundation phase staff plan creatively for pupils to use the outdoors to develop their learning and skills. For example, in the nursery, pupils develop their physical skills effectively building with large, plastic bricks in the construction area. They plan a beneficial range of independent and adult led learning activities. However, in a few cases adults do not always intervene at appropriate times to help move pupils' learning forward.

Teachers are beginning to take into consideration the new curriculum and its four purposes when planning learning activities, and are developing more opportunities for pupils to influence their own learning. For example, in the foundation phase pupils help to plan a topic on parties for the spring term. These strategies improve pupils' engagement and interest in their learning well.

Staff plan effective opportunities for pupils to use and apply their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. For example, older pupils practice drawing line graphs when analysing data from growing potatoes. However, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop a broad enough range of ICT skills. In addition, opportunities to develop Welsh language skills in formal teaching activities and informal situations do not develop systematically enough over time.

Learning experiences reflect the context of the school, the local area and Wales suitably. For example, foundation phase pupils develop their understanding of Welsh folk dancing, song and story effectively through the engaging lead creative schools project. In key stage 2, pupils compare their locality with another area in a neighbouring county. Teachers enhanced the curriculum appropriately through educational visits and visitors. For example, in key stage 2 pupils visit an outdoor centre where they learn about the environment and undertake outdoor activities, such as canoeing.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

There are many opportunities for pupils to take an active role in decision-making and the life of the school. For example, pupils from the school council and junior road safety group work with the local police support officer to tackle the issue of parking outside of the school. The school's eco-committee raise local issues, such as pet fouling in the community. In addition, the school champions the United Nations convention on the rights of the child and this helps to ensure that pupils understand their personal freedoms. These initiatives contribute purposefully to pupils' understanding that they have an important role to play in their society.

The school has positive relationships with parents and the local community. Leaders and staff communicate important information about the life of the school well, such as through regular newsletters and social media. Parents value the school's open door policy as this offers beneficial opportunities for them to express their views or raise concerns. Leaders plan well to help parents and carer support their children's learning. For example, a recent workshop for parents helped them to understand how the school teaches basic numerical concepts and provided useful suggestions as to how they might help their child at home.

Teachers monitor and analyse information on pupil progress appropriately. In a majority of cases, they use this information competently to help identify pupils who need support. However, teachers' evaluations are not always accurate enough and as a result, they do not identify well enough a minority of pupils who need extra help. The school has satisfactory arrangements to support the pupils it identifies as needing help with their learning. For example, pupils in key stage 2 identified as needing support to improve their literacy skills benefit from a limited range of interventions. However, in the foundation phase, teachers manage support for pupils within the class and this is not consistently effective in addressing these pupils' needs. Across the school, pupils' individual development plans are suitable. However they do not always identify clearly enough what support pupils need or their targets for improvement. As a result, these pupils do not always make strong enough progress.

Staff work well with a range of specialist services and outside agencies, including speech and language therapists and educational psychologists. These arrangements provide beneficial support for pupils.

The school has a broad variety of strategies for improving pupils' attendance. Staff make regular contact with the parents of pupils whose attendance is poor, through phone calls and home visits. As a result, they understand the reasons for school absence well. Incentives include rewards for improved attendance, such as non-school uniform days, certificates and letters home to parents. These initiatives have a suitable impact in improving attendance rates.

The school has worthwhile arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking and the school's sports ambassadors promote physical activity efficiently. The school provides varied opportunities to ensure that pupils make healthy lifestyle choices through, for example, extra-curricular activities such as dance club.

The school promotes pupils spiritual, moral and social development well, for example through engaging collective worship and through a comprehensive personal and social education programme. As a result, most pupils develop strong, caring values. For example, pupils visit the local care home regularly and work with patients who have dementia. Visits from local religious leaders help pupils to consider and reflect on their spirituality purposefully.

In most respects, the school's processes for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. However, the inspection team identified a few issues in the outdoor environment that may affect pupil wellbeing and brought these to the attention of school leaders.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher, staff and governing body share a common purpose, and succeed in creating a calm, caring, inclusive community for all pupils. The staff are a committed and supportive team, who strive consistently to prepare pupils to be kind and caring individuals. For example, to help realise this vision they ensure that pupils have regular links with a local dementia ward and home for the elderly through pen pal activities and visits.

Leaders promote professional values successfully. There are useful procedures in place to appraise staff that lead to specific targets for further development. These procedures involve beneficial professional dialogue about teachers' strengths and areas for development and in many cases lead to an improvement in teachers' practice. Leaders offer all staff worthwhile opportunities to engage in professional learning. A few teachers help train staff in other settings and the school works well with the regional consortium and local authority to facilitate this. Leaders provide regular training within the school, which in a few cases has a beneficial effect. For example, the sharing of good practice in teaching mathematics has led to improved standards in this important curriculum area.

All members of staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. They work conscientiously to monitor aspects of the school's work, for example through scrutinising books and observing lessons. However, their monitoring does not focus well enough on identifying the standards achieved by individual or groups of pupils.

As a result, the school's self-evaluation processes do not support the school in identify important issues that need improvement, for example improving the standards of pupils who are less able or need support. The school's self-evaluation processes do not always link clearly enough to improvement strategies. Leaders have a broad range of priorities on which they are working and it is not always clear how they will monitor the impact of actions and judge their success. As a result, these procedures are not always effective enough.

The governing body is supportive of the school and fulfils its duties conscientiously. The headteacher keeps governors regularly informed about the school's work and its response to national developments, such as how it is developing new areas of learning and experience within the school curriculum. The governing body has a secure awareness of the school's strategic priorities and recent developments. However, the governors' roles in challenging the school about pupil standards and progress are limited.

Leaders have made difficult decisions in order to manage a challenging budget. They manage the school's resources effectively and consider spending decisions in relation to improvement priorities appropriately. Overall, leaders provide good quality resources that meet pupils' needs well. They manage the outside area in the foundation phase effectively to enhance the learning experiences of pupils successfully. The school uses the pupil development grant appropriately to provide extra staffing to work with vulnerable learners. This supports these learners to make suitable progress.

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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