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

A report on

Bishop Gore School

De La Beche Road
Sketty
Swansea
SA2 9AP

Date of inspection: April 2023

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Bishop Gore School

Name of provider	Bishop Gore School
Local authority	City and County of Swansea
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	1262
Pupils of statutory school age	1081
Number in sixth form	181
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Secondary is 20.2%)	25.3%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Secondary is 17.8%)	20.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.8%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	11.5%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	19/04/2015
Start date of inspection	24/04/2023
The school is a lead school for initial teacher education. There is a specialist teaching facility on site that is maintained by the local authority.	

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

Overview

Bishop Gore School is a diverse and inclusive school where the well-being of pupils and staff is at the heart of its work. Leaders are united in their determination to keep everyone safe and to help all pupils, whatever their background, to succeed.

Strong working relationships between teachers and pupils underpin effective teaching and learning at Bishop Gore School. There is a purposeful focus on developing the quality of teaching across the curriculum. In general, teachers use a variety of appropriate teaching methods to ensure that many pupils make secure progress. For example, they explain new concepts clearly and check how well pupils have understood them using a variety of assessment approaches before moving on with the learning. Where teaching is particularly effective, teachers plan engaging activities that develop pupils' subject knowledge and skills well. However, where teaching is less successful, teachers' expectations are too low, or they provide pupils with too much support, which hinders their ability to become independent learners.

The school's curriculum meets the needs of nearly all pupils who have access to a wide range of courses. Its curriculum reflects the diverse nature of the school. The school has made good progress in implementing Curriculum for Wales, focusing on skills and subject knowledge. This includes providing learning experiences that match the needs and aspirations of pupils. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities, especially within the performing arts.

The headteacher is clear about the direction she wants to take the school and this vision is understood and shared by all staff. Self-evaluation and planning for improvement arrangements focus securely on this aim. A wide array of professional learning opportunities support staff to meet the school's strategic priorities. The school has made progress in changing approaches to teaching and learning. Staff work collaboratively and enthusiastically to improve their practice. However, self-evaluation does not always identify precisely enough what needs to be developed. This means that improvements have not been swift enough in a few areas.

Recommendations

R1 Ensure that teaching provides a sufficiently high level of challenge for all pupils

R2 Refine self-evaluation so that it focuses on the impact of actions to precisely identify any aspects of teaching and learning that need improvement

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils make sound progress in learning. They recall prior learning well and apply this knowledge suitably to their work. In a few lessons, pupils make exceptional progress in developing their subject knowledge and skills. A few pupils' progress is too variable. Most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make suitable progress, particularly in developing their skills.

Most pupils are attentive in lessons and listen carefully to teachers' instructions, explanations or questions. Many engage well in class discussions and provide clear verbal responses to teachers' questions. The majority use subject-specific vocabulary accurately in their spoken responses and explain their reasoning or offer further detail effectively when prompted. More able pupils reference their reading or prior knowledge to justify their opinions effectively. However, a few pupils offer limited responses to questions, partly because they do not have the vocabulary or confidence to contribute.

When pupils are given an opportunity to, nearly all read aloud competently and with expression. Most pupils have secure comprehension skills, and a minority develop their advanced reading skills well. However, a few pupils struggle to move beyond literal interpretations of texts or are over-reliant on their teachers' explanations.

Many pupils produce well-structured extended writing when given the opportunity. A few pupils produce carefully crafted narrative writing to engage the reader. More able pupils produce well-constructed literary responses, for example when discussing how war is presented by Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. Many pupils write for different purposes in a suitable range of subjects across the curriculum. The majority use a broad vocabulary and include subject-specific terminology securely in their written work. However, a minority of pupils continue to make basic technical errors in their writing and have weak handwriting. A few use a limited vocabulary.

A majority of pupils have a secure grasp of number and a minority have strong numeracy skills. They use the four rules and convert between percentages, decimals and fractions fluently. They apply their knowledge of a variety of mathematical concepts to solve complex problems. For example, they use their understanding of fractions, negative numbers, and factorisation to simplify algebraic fractions. However, a minority of pupils do not sufficiently grasp number concepts and consequently struggle to solve problems in context.

A majority of pupils have a suitable understanding of shapes and measures. They can calculate areas and volumes of different shapes and convert between different units. A similar proportion of pupils analyse data suitably. They calculate averages and measures for sets of data and can present their findings competently using graphs and charts. For example, in geography, they plot graphs accurately to represent the relationship between the magnitude of an earthquake and the number of fatalities. They analyse graphs to draw sensible conclusions. A minority of pupils do not analyse data well enough. They do not use their graphs or summary of data well enough to draw conclusions.

Where teaching is strongest, pupils develop their thinking skills well. For example, in chemistry when they consider the impact of science on real life or in personal and social education lessons when they explore the probable effects of airbrushing photographs of models on self-image.

During practical activities, pupils show control and dexterity, for example when using apparatus confidently and safely in science. They develop their understanding of the impact of gesture and facial expression on their performance skills well in performing arts. During computing lessons, pupils develop their digital skills suitably and benefit from appropriate opportunities to apply their skills across the curriculum. For example, in science, pupils develop their computational thinking when drawing a flow chart to classify whether a diagram of a substance is an element, molecule, compound or mixture.

Many pupils develop their Welsh language skills well. The majority recall Welsh vocabulary suitably, and their pronunciation is sound. In their spoken Welsh, they extend and improve simple phrases effectively by using appropriate idioms and justifying their views. These pupils successfully write sentences and short paragraphs using correct verb tenses and extended vocabulary. A minority of pupils are too reliant on scaffolding provided by the teacher or have weak recall of prior learning.

Pupils in the sixth form approach their learning with maturity and positive attitudes. Nearly all take pride in the presentation of work. Most pupils recall previous knowledge securely and make good progress in their lessons. Many use this knowledge effectively to draw links across topics and themes. Most listen carefully and provide precise responses to teachers' questions. They are enthusiastic about their learning and ask pertinent questions to further their understanding. They engage well in discussions with teachers and each other. Many pupils explain subject concepts in depth in their written work, for example explain to assess Marxist views of crime and deviance.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils feel safe in school and value the caring and inclusive environment. Many appreciate the diverse nature of the school community and feel they are treated respectfully by staff and pupils. They are polite to teachers and visitors around the school, embodying the school's vision to be ready, respectful and safe.

Many pupils feel they are supported well by the school in their emotional, physical and mental well-being. Almost all feel that they have a member of staff that they can turn to if they have concerns. Many feel that the school deals swiftly with any issues that arise. Pupils in general value the benefits of the tutoring system, which allows younger pupils to feel supported by their older peers.

Nearly all pupils who access the specialist teaching facility enjoy their time there and feel the staff in the facility support them well. Pupils who access specialist provision facilities such as 'B-Hi5' and 'Mi-Space' appreciate the support they receive for their behavioural and emotional needs.

Many pupils value the wide range of appealing and inclusive extra-curricular activities and participation rates are high. These include various sports, clubs and popular school productions.

Pupils from all backgrounds take on leadership roles within the school, for example by becoming house captains, members of the house council, or joining the pupil governing body through democratic elections. In particular, sixth-form pupils value the wide range of leadership opportunities available to them. These opportunities contribute to their development as ethical, informed citizens. Many pupils carry out these roles with maturity and enthusiasm, developing their personal and social skills successfully. Many pupils, especially those on the pupil governing body, use their voice thoughtfully and constructively to influence school life positively. For example, they introduced a uniform swap shop and ensured that sanitary hygiene products were freely available in toilets. However, not all pupils are aware of these positive changes and feel that their voices are not always heard.

Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They understand the school's behaviour policy and feel that it is applied consistently and fairly. Most demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning and are prompt to lessons. They settle quickly to tasks. While most can sustain concentration and remain focused on their work, a few younger pupils are passive in their learning or lose focus, lacking the resilience and engagement to complete tasks. Where teaching is particularly strong, a minority of pupils develop as ambitious, capable learners who are fully engaged in their learning. However, a minority do not take enough pride in their work.

Pupils are attending school more regularly this year compared to last year, when the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact nationally on school attendance. Considerably fewer pupils are persistently absent this year.

Teaching and learning experiences

Most teachers at Bishop Gore School establish strong working relationships with pupils based on trust and mutual respect. They know their pupils well and have high expectations of their behaviour, which helps create a calm and purposeful learning environment. Most teachers have secure subject knowledge and are good language role models. In a few lessons where teaching is highly effective, teachers use their subject knowledge well to motivate and engage pupils to make strong progress.

Many teachers plan their lessons purposefully to build on prior learning. These teachers provide clear explanations and well-designed resources that support pupils' learning effectively. The majority of teachers use modelling well to demonstrate to pupils the quality of work they should be aiming to achieve and how to approach the task. However, where teaching is less effective, teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are not always high enough, and they do not provide them with a suitable level of challenge. They often plan for what activities they want pupils to undertake rather than focusing on what they want them to learn.

In a few lessons where teaching is particularly strong, teachers are ambitious about what their pupils can achieve. These teachers plan challenging tasks that deepen pupils' subject knowledge and develop their skills well. They address misconceptions promptly that enables pupils to make rapid progress.

A minority of teachers use skilful questioning techniques to probe pupils' thinking and challenge them to develop their verbal responses. However, a minority do not use questioning well enough to deepen pupils' understanding. These teachers focus too much on pupils' recall of information rather than requiring them to provide more detailed responses that develop independent thinking skills.

Most teachers provide pupils with supportive and purposeful verbal feedback, but the quality of teachers' written feedback is too variable. Where whole-class feedback is effective, teachers ensure that pupils identify and act upon their individual targets for improvement. However, in too many instances, teachers' comments are not precise enough to show pupils how to improve their work, nor do teachers ensure that pupils respond appropriately to their comments.

The school has comprehensive systems to track and monitor pupils' progress. Reports to parents are regular and contain valuable information. An annual report includes helpful comments on pupils' strengths and areas for improvement in subject areas as well as personalised comments from form tutors, pastoral leaders and members of the senior leadership team.

Leaders carefully consider pupils' aspirations and interests when designing the curriculum to ensure it builds suitably on prior learning and meets the needs of nearly all pupils. A wide range of courses is available for pupils at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, including a variety of general and vocational courses. Staff provide useful advice and guidance to pupils as they choose their courses and when moving on to the next steps in their lives. There are valuable alternative curriculum arrangements to support vulnerable pupils and those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This enables these pupils to progress to meaningful destinations.

The wide range of extra-curricular opportunities available to pupils help to enrich the formal curriculum. This includes sports clubs such as netball and basketball, subject-level support sessions and the Duke of Edinburgh Award. In addition, there is an extensive range of performing arts clubs and a yearly school production.

The school has a clear vision for its work in developing the Curriculum for Wales. Leaders have consulted widely with stakeholders to formulate this vision and worked well in partnership with partner primary schools to ensure continuity in learning when pupils move to Bishop Gore School. The school has retained its focus on subject-level skills and knowledge and has planned carefully how progression will look in each area of learning. Leaders work in partnership to ensure that links between different areas of learning are authentic and sequenced appropriately.

Skills co-ordinators provide beneficial support for staff with tasks to develop pupils' skills across the curriculum. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their advanced reading skills such as synthesis, evaluation and summary. In addition, teachers' written feedback does not always help pupils to improve their extended writing, especially their technical accuracy. Leaders use a range of baseline tests and information from teachers to identify those pupils who require extra support with basic literacy and numeracy skills. These pupils are provided with helpful support to make secure progress in these areas.

There are worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills in Welsh lessons. In addition, most pupils are entered for a Welsh language qualification at the end of Key Stage 4. Staff across the school regularly use every day Welsh in their interactions with pupils. There are also suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their appreciation of Welsh culture and heritage. This includes Welsh themes incorporated into schemes of work, the annual school Eisteddfod and celebrations of Welsh events such as St David's Day and Dwirnod Shwmai Sumai.

The personal and social education (PSE) programme is comprehensive and supports the development of pupils' social and emotional skills well. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the history and experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and LGBTQ+ people within the formal curriculum and during assemblies, form-time activities and extra-curricular clubs.

Care, support and guidance

Bishop Gore School places a strong emphasis on staff and pupil well-being. Senior leaders have developed an approach that focuses on all members of the school community being ready, respectful and safe. The school's inclusive values and a strong culture of participation in learning are reinforced successfully by the ethos of providing equity for all.

Staff at the 'Hub' provide effective support for the well-being of pupils. Safeguarding, attendance and pastoral support officers work collaboratively with progress leaders to provide pupils with the emotional and social support they require. Regular network meetings between all pastoral staff promote open dialogue to review progress and remove barriers to learning, using support packages when necessary.

Form tutors and co-tutors support pupils well within the form classes. Pupils benefit from the opportunity to work with older peers in these classes to make informed decisions about their future career or educational pathways.

The school has suitable procedures for dealing with any bullying incidents. A positive behaviour approach provides staff with valuable strategies to deal effectively with disruptive behaviour. Their strong working relationships with pupils help promote positive behaviour throughout the school, which is recognised through an effective rewards system.

Pupils with ALN, particularly those who access specialist provision or interventions, receive suitable individualised support to meet their educational and well-being needs. The ALN team has valuable relationships with a range of external agencies and parents who play a key role in the pupil-centred approach to review meetings. The school's support for mainstream pupils with ALN is a notable strength. Procedures to monitor and track the progress of pupils with ALN are sound. Staff who provide bespoke packages through specialist provisions, care exceptionally well for their pupils' emotional and behavioural needs. Where appropriate, these pupils are encouraged to engage in mainstream classes where they participate with enjoyment.

The specialist teaching facility (STF) is a welcoming, supportive base for pupils with a wide range of additional needs. Staff know the pupils well and foster warm, supportive, and productive relationships. Most pupils benefit from access to mainstream lessons to support the development of their literacy and numeracy skills.

A wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities provides valuable opportunities to promote the social and cultural development of pupils of all ages, abilities and interests. These include sports activities such as dodgeball, basketball and other experiences such as music and drama groups. The school's inclusive nature ensures that all pupils have opportunities to be involved in these valuable enrichment activities. School productions include a diverse representation from across the school community. Scholarships and practical support are available to ensure that all pupils have equitable access to enable full participation in sporting and creative activities.

Pupils benefit from a comprehensive PSE programme that is mapped across all subjects. It caters well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. This carefully monitored provision is adapted promptly in reaction to any local issues. For example, it offers pupils 'Our Streets Now' sessions to support concerns around societal issues.

The school has established a strong culture of safeguarding, where pupils' well-being is at the heart of its work. It has appropriate procedures for recording and monitoring attendance and effective strategies to address challenges in this area, including the appointment of a family engagement officer. These strategies have led to a notable improvement in whole-school attendance.

Staff have a secure knowledge of their roles and responsibilities in keeping pupils safe, and they work diligently to help pupils understand how to protect themselves from harm. Procedures for reporting concerns are clear and robust. The school responds promptly to concerns and provides valuable interventions. Staff work closely with external agencies to provide comprehensive support for pupils and their families.

The school site is secure, and there are suitable systems in place to manage visitors to the school and ensure that they are aware of the school's safeguarding procedure. All staff receive an appropriate level of safeguarding training annually. The school has effective recruitment procedures and ensures that all new members of staff receive safeguarding information upon appointment.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides thoughtful and sensitive leadership and is supported well by her senior leadership team. They place the well-being of pupils and staff at the heart of their work. Leaders and staff have responded sensitively to the considerable challenges faced by the school, and its wider community, as it recovers from the pandemic. Leaders promote a strong safeguarding culture, and their work has had a positive impact on pupils' attendance. However, self-evaluation processes are not always precise enough and this has slowed the impact of some actions to improve the quality of teaching.

Since the headteacher was appointed, she has collaborated well with staff to develop and share the vision of every pupil receiving the best possible opportunities to realise their potential. There is strong support for and understanding of this vision throughout the school community. In addition, she has revised the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team, so they are delegated sensibly, defined clearly, and understood well. Members of the senior team have complementary skills and challenge one another supportively. Their strong sense of teamwork supports the headteacher suitably in managing change, including the culture and practice in teaching and learning.

Line management arrangements are clear and middle leaders are held to account suitably. They value the support they receive from senior leaders and benefit from frequent discussions with them. These discussions are aligned appropriately to the school's vision and priorities, but they do not focus well enough on the impact teaching has on pupils' learning and skills development. Consequently, it is more difficult for leaders to be precise enough about the teaching aspects they aim to improve or about what success might look like.

Performance management arrangements are suitable and supportive, and link well to the school's professional learning programme. The headteacher tackles any instances of underperformance in a sensitive and supportive manner. This contributes to a clear sense of loyalty and collegiality amongst staff.

The headteacher's clear sense of direction and purpose permeate the school's approaches to improvement. Development strategies focus well on changing the culture of teaching and learning in the school in line with the vision. There is an inquiry approach to school improvement, where new approaches are trialled appropriately and developed over time. However, these initiatives are not always evaluated in a timely way. This means that improvement is slow in a few areas, such as developments in assessment.

Quality assurance and self-evaluation processes are systematic and comprehensive. Self-evaluation is based on a wide range of first-hand evidence of teaching and learning, including the analysis of data, work scrutiny, lesson observations and learning walks. The school pays appropriate attention to pupil voice and the views of parents. However, quality assurance processes for teaching and learning tend to be based on compliance rather than quality. Generally, pupil progress is not considered carefully enough as a measure of the effectiveness of teaching.

Self-evaluation processes are collaborative. Senior leaders work with middle leaders to support self-review in their areas of responsibility. Middle leaders work closely with their teams to reflect on improvement. Overall, the school identifies broadly helpful and pertinent areas for improvement. However, information from self-evaluation is not always triangulated well enough. This, together with an overemphasis on particular approaches in teaching and learning, means that priorities for improvement are not identified specifically enough.

There is a vibrant culture of professional learning in the school. Staff engage enthusiastically with a wide range of developmental opportunities. They benefit from a well-designed coaching programme that reinforces collaboration and mutual support. Staff development is based on identifying an individual's strengths and

needs and supporting their development in a tailored way. There are purposeful opportunities for staff to develop their leadership skills, including secondment to the senior team. Although the school's work as a lead school with an initial teacher education provider is developing appropriately, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this partnership on professional learning for staff.

The school takes a strategic approach to professional learning. Developmental activities are linked securely to the school's priorities. Professional learning focuses strongly on improving teaching. This helps staff to develop their practice independently and supports the coaching process. In addition, there are many formal and informal opportunities for staff to reflect on and discuss pedagogy. This is helping to establish a shared language for practice and a consistent approach to teaching. However, professional learning is not always evaluated thoroughly enough to refine approaches and ensure a positive impact on teaching and learning.

The headteacher, business manager and governors review spending carefully and plan responsibly. They make effective use of the pupil development grant and evaluate its impact thoroughly. For example, the grant is used suitably to engage with vulnerable families to improve pupils' attendance and attainment, to increase staffing capacity to support with pupils' wellbeing and provide financial support for school trips and uniforms.

Governors are very supportive of the school and diligently carry out their duties such as promoting healthy eating and drinking. They are involved suitably in self-evaluation and are well-informed of the school's work. They have a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement and contribute appropriately to setting the school's strategic direction. They offer suitable, relevant challenge to leaders, for example on attainment, attendance, and well-being matters.

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 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, where appropriate
- visit a broad sample of lessons, 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
(http://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
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