



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

A report on

St Woolos Primary School

**Stow Hill
Newport
NP20 4DW**

Date of inspection: May 2023

by

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

About St Woolos Primary School

Name of provider	St Woolos Primary School
Local authority	Newport City Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	366
Pupils of statutory school age	268
Number in nursery classes	54
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 Primary is 23.0%)	30.1%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 16.1%)	11.9%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	61.2%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/11/2000
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/01/2015
Start date of inspection	22/05/2023

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

St. Woolos Primary School is an effective and caring school, which holds the community it serves at the heart of all it does. Pupil well-being is a strength of the school. This is due to the priority leaders and staff place upon pupils being happy and ready to learn. There is a strong focus on inclusion and ensuring equality for all, whilst celebrating diversity.

Teachers are effective in delivering a curriculum that supports pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills purposefully over the time they are at the school. From their starting points, pupils respond well and become confident when applying their skills in oracy, reading, writing and numeracy across the curriculum. However, pupils are less confident in using digital skills or when using the Welsh language.

Staff provide interesting lessons and an abundance of purposeful visits to support the learning and inspire pupils to consider their own contributions in the future. However, opportunities to develop creativity through the expressive arts are less well developed. Pupils feel that they have a voice in their school and its curriculum, and are confident when suggesting improvements, such as more opportunities to develop their physical skills.

Over time, and through constant reflection, leaders implement well-considered plans to improve the school for the benefit of the pupils. For example, there is a strong focus on improving oracy. This not only supports the youngest pupils but enables pupils who transfer to the school from other settings. This is particularly helpful to those who are new to the English language. As a result, most pupils rapidly develop linguistic skills that enable them to access the curriculum and develop as independent learners.

Governors play an active role in the school and are effective in supporting it to move forward. Together, with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, they have a clear understanding of the school's position and where the focus for improvement lies. Parents trust leaders and staff. They are very supportive of the school and appreciate its work in nurturing and developing their children.

Recommendations

R1 Improve pupils' digital and Welsh oracy skills

R2 Improve provision for expressive arts, creativity and to support the development of pupils' physical skills

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at school, most pupils make good progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills from their starting points. This includes pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and those new to the English language.

When pupils first join the school's nursery classes, many have relatively low speech, communication and personal and social skills. However, they soon settle into school life, develop positive relationships with staff and their peers and make strong progress in developing their communication skills. By the time they reach Year 2, most pupils listen attentively and can explain how speaking publicly is different from speaking with their friends. Older pupils talk passionately about issues they consider significant, for example when emphasising the importance of bees in the ecosystem or the need for equality in life. Across the school, nearly all pupils who are new to speaking the English language make rapid progress in learning the language.

Overall, pupils develop their reading skills well. The youngest pupils are enthusiastic when learning initial letter sounds and link them to words they know. In Year 2, most pupils begin to use a range of skills to establish the meaning of new words. They recount the events of stories clearly, for example when describing the story of Gelert. In Year 4, most pupils start to become more fluent readers and discuss their text at greater length, exploring plot and character. By Year 6, most pupils have strong reading skills and effectively research facts to present when learning about 'Women in Computing Day'.

From a young age, many pupils are keen to develop their early writing skills. In the nursery, they follow trails with their fingers in preparation to write, while in reception classes they learn to form letters and spell their names. Most pupils in Year 1 write a diary of key vocabulary and simple sentences from their observations of how a caterpillar develops. By Year 4, most pupils refine their use of punctuation to add drama to their creative writing, by using an ellipsis or including speech marks. Most older pupils write interesting and detailed recounts of their visit to the Brecon Mountain railway, demonstrating strong writing stamina and effective use of descriptive and technical language. Overall, most pupils write legibly and present their work well. As pupils become older and acquire more literacy skills, they apply these well across the curriculum.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their mathematical skills and understanding. Pupils in nursery begin to count objects up to 10 and in reception classes they work with coins up to the value of 20p. By Year 2, most pupils make amounts with coins to complete specific tasks such as calculating how many 10p

coins it takes to make £3.50. As pupils progress through the school, they use measuring equipment precisely, such as trundle wheels, to measure the playground and help them plan a flower garden for pollinating bees. By Year 6, most pupils develop a sound grasp of a range of mathematical skills and use these well, for example when creating a budget for a fictitious country to different government departments.

Many pupils are beginning to develop an understanding of the Welsh language and acquire a vocabulary of key words. For example, in reception classes, nearly all pupils respond to the register and order what they would like for lunch. By Year 2, a few pupils spontaneously exchange simple pleasantries, such as 'sut wyt ti?' Older pupils respond to simple questions about the weather, although they often lack confidence in using these skills. Overall though, across the school, pupils' Welsh language skills do not generally develop as well as they could.

Many pupils across the classes are beginning to develop their digital skills and know how to keep themselves safe online. In the nursery, pupils are beginning to develop their mouse control, while in Years 1 and 2 they play games to enhance their learning, for example to improve their understanding of money. Older pupils access their online school account and use email effectively. However, they do not use their digital skills as well as they could to support their learning across the curriculum.

Generally, nearly all pupils develop sound thinking skills and solve problems well. For example, Year 1 pupils investigate the properties of materials for building a house for the three little pigs. The oldest pupils use a methodical approach when thinking about concepts to effectively explore information about Nelson Mandela and apartheid.

When provided with the opportunity, most pupils develop their creativity well. For example, younger pupils draw their own mehendi patterns when exploring the festival of Eid Murbarak, while older pupils create their own illustrated story book about a bee. However, across most classes, pupils' performing arts skills are less well developed.

Across the school most pupils generally develop their physical skills well. In the younger classes pupils make strong progress in developing their gross motor skills through the riding of bikes and using tyres as steppingstones to improve their balance. Pupils in reception develop their fine motor skills and hand to eye co-ordination in preparation for learning to write. As they get older, pupils in Years 3 and 4 learn to control their bodies through sessions that support them to develop their balance and flexibility.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Across the school, nearly all pupils' well-being is strong. Pupils embrace the school's values, responding very well to the rules, routines and expectations set out for them. In return, they demonstrate care and consideration towards others. In classes and around the school nearly all pupils behave well. Most pupils feel staff treat them with respect and fairness. There are highly effective working relationships between staff and pupils. Nearly all pupils are well mannered and respectful to staff, visitors and each other. As a result, nearly all pupils feel happy and safe in school and know who to turn to for support. This is an outstanding feature of the school.

Most pupils across the school develop positive attitudes towards their learning and are generally engage in their tasks very well. Most pupils are confident to discuss their learning experiences and to explain how they have gone about completing their tasks and what they have learnt as a result. In lessons, most pupils demonstrate increasing perseverance and respond well to the challenges they have, such as solving problems and cracking codes. Over time, most pupils demonstrate that they are developing the attitudes and behaviours to become successful and independent learners.

Most pupils understand the importance of a balanced diet and are keen to purchase healthy snacks from the school tuck shop. They appreciate the benefits of physical activity and the positive impact this has on their well-being. They enjoy and understand the benefits of playing actively with their peers at break and lunch times.

Most pupils are becoming increasingly aware of their rights as a child. For example, older pupils consider how well the school promotes their rights through celebrating different religions and languages. They understand that they are developing as well-informed citizens though their exploration of complex concepts such as diversity and conflict. They are confident when making suggestions about what the school could do better, such as having a quiet place for reflection and worship.

Pupils take inspiration from the story of Harvey Milk and his creation of the pride flag. From this they design their own flags to represent joy, peace and positive relationships. Younger pupils create a 'kinder internet spell' to outline safety rules while older pupils learn about how to treat people with respect on social media. Overall, pupils develop a sound awareness of internet safety, with increasing sophistication in response to their changing use of the internet throughout their time at the school.

Many pupils, including those with ALN, take on leadership roles and responsibilities within a wide variety of pupil groups. Most pupils feel leaders and staff value their opinions and often act upon them, for example through their involvement in the creation and development of the school library, where pupils manage electronic library cataloguing and system of cards. In addition, pupils influence how and what they learn through ideas such as 'no pen and paper days' and the younger classes have 'talking tubs' to help generate discussion.

Most pupils listen attentively and work well with others. Older pupils discuss their work and support each other well. They answer questions confidently and consider others' ideas and opinions. Most pupils speak positively about extra-curricular experiences they have and how these enhance their learning. Generally, they respond well to verbal feedback or prompts, both from adults and their peers, during lessons. However, pupils' responses to written feedback are inconsistent and do not always support pupils to move their learning forward.

Although attendance has improved compared to last year, when the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on school attendance, pupils eligible for free school meals have a notably higher rate of absence compared to other pupils.

Teaching and learning experiences

Leaders and teachers ensure that the school's curriculum meets the needs of its pupils successfully. A range of meaningful experiences promote high aspirations and inspire pupils to want to learn and to belong to the school community. Over time, this successfully develops pupils' skills through a range of meaningful experiences, enabling them to learn and preparing them for a lifetime of learning.

Staff work together to plan whole school topics and encourage pupils to contribute their ideas when planning the learning. As a result, pupils learn about matters that interest or affect them, for example, the Cynefin topic with its focus on diversity and helping pupils to understand the differences between people's lives.

The school has a strong focus on developing pupils' oracy skills. This includes those who are new to English. This enables pupils to practise and develop their speaking and listening in a wide range of situations. This helps pupils to access the full range of experiences within the school's curriculum, to develop independent learning skills and to make sound overall progress. There are many valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their writing and numeracy skills and to apply these skills across the curriculum, for example in numeracy when setting a budget taking into consideration the balanced arguments from fictitious government departments. The curriculum supports pupils to develop an understanding of the history and culture of Wales well. However, provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is underdeveloped. The school provides opportunities for pupils develop their creativity through play, writing and art. However, opportunities for pupils to have wider engagement with expressive arts are limited.

Pupils benefit from learning from visitors and through visits that enrich the curriculum. For example, meeting the First Minister and working with artists and musicians helps to raise pupils' aspirations and promotes further reflection on their own ambitions for life. In addition, the school provides experiences that inspire pupils to think about future careers and the world of work.

The school has a comprehensive approach for developing pupils' personal and social skills to support their development and understanding of making healthy lifestyle choices, managing their emotions and supporting their well-being. There is a strong focus on pupils developing an understanding of how to form and maintain safe and respectful relationships. However, opportunities for pupils in the oldest classes to develop their physical skills are limited.

Working relationships between staff and pupils are very good, as are relationships between pupils. Nearly all classroom learning environments support pupils to make choices and develop as independent, resilient learners through well-considered resources and routines. The deployment of teaching assistants suitably supports pupils. These staff carefully consider the most appropriate moment to step in to help. The majority of teachers and a few teaching assistants use Welsh purposefully to support pupils to learn and use the language.

Most lessons sustain pupils' interest and build upon prior learning well. Staff share clear and appropriate success criteria with pupils to engage them and encourage them to manage their own learning. There are frequent opportunities for pupils to

self-assess and peer assess, and as pupils move through the school this becomes increasingly sophisticated. In most lessons, teachers and teaching assistants use purposeful questioning to evaluate pupils' understanding and move the learning on. As a result, most teachers provide ongoing verbal feedback to pupils in lessons effectively. However, on a few occasions, staff miss opportunities to further challenge pupils as feedback, including written, does not always focus sharply enough on supporting pupils with their next steps in pupils' learning. As a result, pupils continue to make errors over time. Overall, across the school, the consistency of teaching and support for well-being has a positive effect on pupil progress. Reports to parents and carers provide appropriate information on their child's progress and how to continue to progress.

The principles of foundation learning are evident in classrooms for younger pupils. This includes nursery and reception classes where effective use of the well-developed outdoor learning area helps to develop pupils' skills. Most classes do not have access to the outdoors as they are not located on the ground floor. To counter this, teachers plan lessons that involve learning about the outdoors, such as a seasonal approach to learning that includes investigating pumpkins in autumn and bees and caterpillars in the summer. Across the school, where possible, staff bring in natural objects, such as lilies, to help pupils to learn about the parts of a flower. Older pupils forage for twigs, leaves and moss in a local park and use these to filter water and discuss how they can improve their strategies.

Care, support and guidance

The school is an inclusive community driven by a clear sense of purpose. Its welcoming and caring culture is an outstanding feature. Staff have a strong and shared commitment to developing an environment where pupil well-being is a priority, through the nurture of tolerance and respect for others. Overall, the school understands the needs of individual pupils well and places a high priority on meeting these effectively.

The school strives to develop strong working relationships with parents and carers to provide valuable support for families in a range of ways. In particular, the school's arrangements for supporting families arriving from other countries are beneficial as they help pupils to settle quickly into school life.

The school is very much at the heart of its community and as a result there is a strong focus on delivering events and services for the community, for example by creating a foodbank to support families during challenging times. A notable feature of the school's work is its provision for family learning workshops so that parents can support learning at home. This work includes hosting valuable parent engagement evenings about the new relationships and sexuality curriculum to raise awareness of what is being taught to pupils.

The school promotes a high level of respect for the different cultures and faiths within its community. There is respectful celebration of customs and differences with beneficial opportunities for pupils to share the cultural experiences with their peers that reflect their heritage. The school is keen to ensure that pupils understand equality and their rights as a child, and this work permeates the school's routines and curriculum.

The school's provision for pupils with ALN and for those pupils who are vulnerable is effective. The ALN co-ordinator provides valuable support to pupils and staff. There are clear procedures to identify pupils' needs at an early stage and plans to meet these needs are comprehensive. This includes carefully targeted support for individuals and groups that enable them to develop skills to access learning and feel included in school life. For example, across the school, teaching assistants deliver extensive literacy, numeracy, and social and personal programmes to support pupils' development. Arrangements to keep pupils' progress under review are effective. As a result, this work impacts positively on pupils' well-being and their readiness to learn.

Staff provide good opportunities for pupils to participate in decision-making in many aspects of school life. Pupil voice groups identify things they would like to change. For example, the School Council met with governors to inform them that pupils would like more opportunities for physical activity during the school day and to discuss how they could work together to achieve this. In addition, pupil librarians successfully create a library space that is a quiet place to study with a wide range of reading materials.

There are sound arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. As a result, most pupils develop an understanding of the importance of choosing a healthy lifestyle. There are a wide range of popular after-school clubs and younger pupils make good use of outdoor physical equipment.

The school provides a variety of rich cultural opportunities as well as worthwhile visits, such as to the Senedd and Bannau Brycheiniog. In addition, the school's Eisteddfod promotes an understanding of Welsh culture. Over time, pupils develop a sense of Cynefin and firm understanding of their locality and heritage. There are worthwhile opportunities for developing pupils' spiritually, morals, values and ethics through collective worship and classroom activities. For example, pupils consider and reflect on being kind, fair, curious and aspirational, which staff reinforce through a charter of expectations.

Arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern. The school's curriculum supports the development of safe relationships and ensures that pupils know how to stay safe online, for example by not sharing their passwords. The school buildings and grounds are maintained and secure. As a result, pupils feel safe at school. Leaders and staff monitor rates of pupils' attendance carefully and promote the benefits of regular attendance at school effectively. In addition, working with partners, the school offers support and guidance for families where attendance is low and how they can improve this.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides thoughtful and caring leadership and acts as a strong role model for staff. Leaders are highly effective in developing and maintaining positive working relationships across the whole school community. Parents are extremely appreciative of the communication and support the school provides. Leaders and teachers provide sensitive support for families who are new to the school, enabling their children to settle easily into school life. These close working relationships

contribute to establishing a strong sense of community built on trust and mutual respect.

Leaders know their school and its community well and identify the most appropriate areas for improvement to meet the needs of pupils. The school's priorities focus directly on embedding the curriculum, improving the quality of teaching and securing well-being for pupils and staff. Leaders at all levels work as a highly effective team to bring about improvement and secure positive outcomes for pupils. They carry out a range of purposeful activities that help to provide a clear picture of the quality of teaching and learning.

Staff are appreciative of the reflective nature of the school's evaluation processes and use the outcome of this work to adapt their professional practice. For example, the school's recent work to refine assessment for learning led to the introduction of pupil conferences, time for pupils to have more closer involvement in what and how they learn and to better understand their next steps in learning. This work is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' experiences and the progress they make.

Leaders take account of local and national priorities appropriately in their improvement planning. For example, they skilfully develop many areas of the Curriculum for Wales. As a result, the school's curriculum is rich and engaging. However, leaders do not focus closely enough on improving standards of Welsh across the school and, as a result, pupils' ability to speak Welsh is underdeveloped.

School leaders have high expectations of staff and are committed to providing an inclusive and effective professional learning culture. The school supports the development of leadership at all levels effectively, for example by encouraging teachers and teaching assistants to attend national leadership training. Senior leaders use performance management systems and partnership working well to identify professional development needs. This supports whole-school improvement, such as the highly effective work to improve oracy across the school. The worthwhile opportunities for teachers to work with other schools and to develop their practice from research contribute to the school's consistently strong teaching.

The governing body demonstrates strong commitment to the role and governors use a breadth of expertise to support the work of the school successfully. They develop innovative ways to further their own development through regular opportunities to share ideas and knowledge. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors support the headteacher and senior leaders well to promote a positive culture of safeguarding. They work with leaders to ensure that suitable policies are in place to promote the importance of healthy eating and drinking among pupils. The headteacher works effectively with governors to manage the school's finances.

Leaders' plans to raise pupils' aspirations are a strength of the school. Leaders and teachers place a high priority on adapting provision to provide a wide range of worthwhile opportunities to learn from, and with, inspirational people in a variety of roles, from politicians to poets. These experiences allow pupils to reflect on their ambitions and to consider the skills, knowledge, attitudes and ethics they will need to achieve them.

The school's work to address the impact of social disadvantage on pupils' achievement and well-being is implemented successfully. Leaders make good use of the pupil development grant, for example to provide a range of effective interventions to support pupils' learning and well-being. The headteacher works with the governing body and staff to ensure that all pupils access the full range of opportunities and experiences on offer.

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Publication date: 26/07/2023