

A report on

Gaer Primary School

**Gaer Road
Newport
NP20 3GY**

Date of inspection: October 2025

by

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

About Gaer Primary School

Name of provider	Gaer Primary School
Local authority	Newport City Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	477
Pupils of statutory school age	366
Number in nursery classes	53
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 22.9%)	24.4%
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 11.1%)	8.2%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	10.7%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	Yes
Date of headteacher appointment	12/05/2014

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	02/07/2018
Start date of inspection	06/10/2025

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.

Summary

Leaders across the federation of schools work collaboratively to provide pupils with a broad, inclusive, and engaging curriculum that reflects their interests well. They work closely with families and external agencies to support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). They match provision in the Learning Resource Based (LRB) to pupils' individual stage of development carefully. This ensures that most pupils make good progress, including those with ALN and those from low-income households.

The school offers a nurturing environment where pupils feel valued and respected. Staff understand well the need to keep pupils safe, but not all are fully aware of the proper procedures to follow.

Teachers supports pupils' spiritual, moral, and cultural development well, broadening their understanding of diversity and social responsibility. Creative and physical activities, including outdoor learning, enhance pupils' well-being and problem-solving skills. Pupils contribute meaningfully to school life and the wider community through initiatives, such as supporting a local food bank.

Across the school, pupils develop confidence in speaking and listening, with most making strong progress in reading and writing. Provision for mathematics is particularly effective, and as a result most pupils develop their understanding well. In many cases, pupils' Welsh language development is too slow.

In general, teachers plan and deliver a broad range of engaging learning activities, although in a minority of cases, teachers over-direct learning. This limits pupils' independence. Teachers generally use questioning well to develop pupils thinking, however a few do not always check pupils' understanding thoroughly before moving on.

Leadership across the federation is cohesive and effective. Leaders set clear expectations and promote strong collaboration across both schools. Leaders have embedded well-established system to monitor and improve the work of the school. However, they lack sufficient focus on pupils' learning. Professional development is aligned well with school priorities. This supports school improvement well, such as in mathematics. Governors work diligently, and support and challenge leaders suitably.

Family learning sessions help to strengthen home-school partnerships successfully and create a shared enjoyment and engagement in learning within and beyond the school.

Recommendations

We have made three recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1. Address the safeguarding concerns identified during the inspection
- R2. Sharpen self-evaluation and improvement strategies to focus better on understanding and developing pupils' learning
- R3. Address inconsistencies in teachers' practice and ensure that they develop pupils' independent learning skills more effectively

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Leaders across the federation work collaboratively to ensure that pupils benefit from a broad and inclusive curriculum that reflects their interests well. This shared commitment ensures that as pupils move through the Gaer Primary School, most, including those in the Learning Resource Base (LRB) and those from low-income households, make good progress from their starting points. The curriculum's breadth and relevance promote strong engagement in learning and helps to underpin pupils' positive attitudes to school.

The school provides a calm and welcoming environment in which pupils feel valued, listened to and respected. Adults use encouraging, positive language to help pupils make the right choices and complete their learning activities successfully. This helps to promote positive behaviours and attitudes across the school. Where a very small number of pupils display challenging behaviour, staff manage these situations well.

Leaders take good account of barriers to learning and work closely with families to overcome them. There are systematic processes in place for identifying and supporting pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). Leaders and teachers use a broad range of evidence, including from parents and external agencies, to plan targeted provision that meets the needs of almost all pupils well. The well-structured provision within the LRB is matched carefully to pupils' stage of development. While all staff are aware of the importance of keeping pupils safe, not all understand well enough the proper procedures to follow if they have concerns.

Spotlight: Purposeful and supportive family learning.

The school hosts engaging family learning sessions that provide parents and pupils with valuable opportunities to learn, create, and problem-solve together in a relaxed and supportive environment. These sessions make learning a shared experience, where families can develop skills and interests, side-by-side. They offer a wide range of exciting activities, including drumming, cycling proficiency, cookery, and arts and crafts. Parents enjoy, and benefit from, the opportunity to work and play alongside their children in school. These experiences help to strengthen home-school partnerships, boost pupils' confidence and engagement, and foster a shared enjoyment of learning that extends beyond the classroom into everyday family life.

Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development well. This ensures that pupils learn to respect different opinions and beliefs. Teachers ensure that pupils have purposeful opportunities to study the lives of inspirational figures from diverse backgrounds, including contemporary black and minority ethnic sportspeople. This

broadens pupils' awareness of the wider world, and nearly all demonstrate an understanding of social differences.

The school provides pupils with a wide variety of creative and physical activities that enrich their learning experiences and promote their well-being. Pupils enjoy working creatively, for instance designing patterns from natural materials. They benefit from regular physical activity that helps them understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The recently enhanced outdoor environment gives younger pupils beneficial opportunities for problem-solving and collaboration, for example when working together to construct a conker-run.

In most lessons, teachers provide a varied range of opportunities for pupils to apply their speaking and listening skills purposefully. Many younger pupils engage confidently in conversations, using a suitable range of vocabulary. Most older pupils explain their work in detail. They converse well with their peers and understand the need to listen to others.

Nearly all teachers' follow a consistent and structured approach to teaching reading and writing. This ensures that most pupils develop their reading skills confidently and read with enjoyment. Teachers plan and deliver purposeful writing activities that support most pupils to build their skills sequentially and effectively over time. In the LRB, teachers and learning support staff question and support pupils skilfully to help develop their reading and writing at level appropriate to their stage of development.

Spotlight: Effective approaches to teaching mathematics

Teachers consider the progressive development of pupils' mathematical skills and concepts effectively. Most use a broad range of techniques successfully to produce depth within learning that enables most pupils to master different concepts and skills effectively. They use maths games and activities imaginatively to make learning fun and relevant. Most teachers provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to apply these skills in meaningful contexts in other areas of learning. As a result, most pupils develop strong problem-solving and reasoning skills. Most pupils make good progress across the breadth of the mathematics curriculum. By the time they reach Year 6, they are confident, competent mathematicians who use a broad range of strategies thoughtfully and have a secure understanding of key mathematics concepts.

The school places a suitable emphasis on developing pupils' digital competence. Pupils engage in a broad range of digital activities that increase in complexity as they move through the school. For example, younger pupils code robots and create simple databases, while older pupils use artificial intelligence to create images that support their work effectively. Many pupils demonstrate growing confidence and fluency in programming and data handling, applying these skills well in real-world contexts.

In most lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to promote pupils' thinking. They are beginning to provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work and that of others. Many teachers employ suitable strategies to pupils' monitor progress in lessons, although in a few cases they do not always check that all pupils understand concepts and ideas before moving learning forward. While nearly all teachers provide interesting and engaging learning opportunities, a majority over-direct learning and do not develop pupils' independence well, such as allowing them to use their own approaches to tasks or present their work in their own way. Learning experiences are generally well-paced, though at times younger pupils can lose focus when required to sit for extended periods.

Most pupils display positive attitudes to learning Welsh and follow simple classroom instructions and questions appropriately. Many use simple Welsh phrases confidently. By Year 6, many pupils show an appropriate understanding of basic spoken Welsh in familiar situations. However, overall, many pupils' progress is not strong enough.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities that enrich learning and strengthen their sense of belonging to the community. Pupils take part in community-based projects, such as supporting local food banks and participating in knit-and-natter groups, helping to develop their social responsibility. A wide range of pupil groups help to enhance the inclusive ethos of the school. These groups give pupils genuine opportunities to influence school life, for instance as 'healthy inspectors', who promote exercise and healthy eating enthusiastically.

The federation is led thoughtfully and diligently by the headteacher, supported by capable deputy headteachers on each site. Together, they form a cohesive team and set consistently high expectations for staff and pupils. Leaders distribute roles and responsibilities thoughtfully. They ensure that staff from both schools in the federation work collaboratively and share good practice. This approach builds leadership capacity and supports the consistent implementation of national initiatives, such as Curriculum for Wales.

Leaders use a broad range of monitoring activities, including lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work, to help identify priorities for improvement. While these processes are well established, they do not focus sharply enough on evaluating the impact of teaching, or of provision, on pupils' learning. As a result, leaders do not always identify where teaching needs improvement. Similarly, improvement strategies often lack a clear enough focus on how leaders' and teachers' actions will improve pupils' learning.

Leaders plan and deliver a coherent programme of professional learning that aligns with school priorities and staff development needs. This has led to improvements in classroom practice, particularly in mathematics. Leaders manage the performance of all staff

effectively, including those in the LRB. They ensure that teachers and support staff have beneficial opportunities to observe best practice within and beyond the school.

Governors are active and supportive partners in the life of the schools. They engage constructively in evaluating school performance and provide suitable challenge to leaders. Governors monitor finances carefully and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. However, they are not always sufficiently clear about how the school uses grant funding, such as the Pupil Development Grant. Leaders use parts of this funding well to support pupils from low-income households, but their evaluation of its impact is not always sharp enough.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils give cause for concern

A site management concern was raised during the inspection, and the local authority has been notified

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking

Leaders and governors generally manage the school's finances appropriately, however they do not focus the pupil development grant consistently well to tackle the impact of poverty on educational attainment.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carers 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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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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