

A report on

Gladstone Primary School

**Gladstone Road
Barry
CF62 8NA**

Date of inspection: September 2025

by

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

About Gladstone Primary School

Name of provider	Gladstone Primary School
Local authority	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	434
Pupils of statutory school age	321
Number in nursery classes	58
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%)	32.1%
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 11.1%)	8.4%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	4.0%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/04/2023

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	29/09/2025

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

Gladstone Primary School is a nurturing and inclusive community that recognises the individual needs of pupils and their families well. Leaders ensure that all school improvement activities are backed by appropriate evidence, gained through ongoing enquiry and research.

The headteacher and governors engage staff at all levels in the ongoing evaluation of teaching and learning across the school. Staff take part in a range of research activities to help them reflect upon and improve the quality of their teaching. Well-designed learning areas enable pupils of all ages to develop and apply skills through a range of engaging activities. Teachers' use of the outdoor learning environment across the younger classes is innovative and highly effective. In combination, the quality of teaching and the learning experiences provided support most pupils to make good progress in many aspects of their learning whilst at the school.

Staff provide high quality support for pupils and their families. Leaders ensure that all staff receive suitable training that is responsive to and closely matched to the needs of all pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those from low-income households. Through a wide range of partnerships, leaders and staff build effective teams around pupils and their families, breaking down barriers to learning successfully.

Leaders have introduced a new approach to teaching mathematics that is beginning to have a positive impact on the ability of younger pupils to understand and use number. In the older classes, teachers do not consider the individual abilities of their pupils well enough and as a result, many older pupils do not receive the appropriate level of challenge or support during mathematics lessons.

Most teachers model spoken Welsh appropriately and provide pupils with regular opportunities to rehearse Welsh words and sentence patterns. However, opportunities for pupils to apply this learning in conversation are limited and as a result, most pupils across the school, lack confidence when speaking Welsh.

Currently, the school is in a very difficult financial situation. The school is in the process of developing a financial recovery plan to present to the local authority.

Recommendations

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

- R1. Work with the local authority to address the school's financial challenges
- R2. Improve mathematics teaching for older pupils
- R3. Improve pupils' Welsh oracy skills

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

The headteacher and governors of Gladstone Primary School have established a clear vision which aims to inspire all pupils to succeed through access to a wide range of authentic experiences and opportunities.

Leaders work effectively with staff at all levels to identify school improvement priorities. Together, they continually review the quality and consistency of the school's provision, ensuring that the school meets the needs of pupils and their families. Leaders engage staff at all levels in ongoing professional research and enquiry. This includes purposeful visits to observe a range of other effective educational settings. There is an ongoing process of shared reflection amongst staff that helps drive a culture of continuous improvement.

Informed by research, the school has developed a well-resourced and stimulating environment for learning. Carefully planned provision both inside and outdoors provides pupils with opportunities to choose how and where they work both independently and with others.

Spotlight: Providing a highly effective enabling environment for younger pupils

The school's approach to developing the learning environment for younger pupils is a significant strength. Teachers have carefully planned a well-resourced indoor and outdoor environment that promotes pupils' independent learning skills effectively. Staff make excellent use of the entire school grounds to provide pupils with opportunities to explore nature, develop their physical, mathematical and communication skills and to ignite their curiosity. Most pupils demonstrate high levels of involvement when playing alongside others or following their own interests and fascinations independently. Staff build on this approach successfully as pupils move through the school. Teachers and support staff continue to support pupils well in demonstrating their creativity and critical thinking in their work across the curriculum.

Leaders make beneficial use of a range of assessment information, including the outcomes of social and emotional surveys to track the progress of all pupils. Regular progress meetings between leaders and staff successfully contribute to ensuring that most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible for free school meals, continue to make strong progress from their starting points.

Spotlight: Effective partnership working to support pupils and their families

Staff at all levels make a highly effective contribution to ensuring that all pupils are safe, secure and able to learn. Senior leaders develop close relationships with pupils and their families. They recognise promptly where families may be experiencing difficulty and work swiftly to provide comprehensive support both directly and through effective links with a range of support agencies. Leaders adapt provision to emerging needs quickly and continue to equip highly trained support staff with the necessary skills to work seamlessly across classes, providing immediate and bespoke support for pupils. The way staff include families in the life of the school is innovative and contributes strongly to maintaining close and trusting relationships that have a significant impact on pupils' well-being and progress.

The school has developed a relevant and engaging curriculum that supports pupils to develop their skills successfully through a wide range of innovative activities. Teachers collaborate well with pupils to construct purposeful learning enquiries that, over time, develop pupils' awareness and understanding of the local area, global issues and how they can participate as purposeful citizens of a diverse Wales and world. The curriculum provides valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. As they move through the school, pupils learn about a variety of religions and develop a good understanding of human rights.

When teaching, staff at all levels apply the school's agreed process of 'plan, do and review' consistently and this has had a notable impact on pupils' standards in oracy and positive attitudes to learning. Most pupils across the school talk about their learning with confidence and enthusiasm.

Teachers use a range successful techniques to help them assess the progress pupils make. Nearly all pupils respond positively to teacher feedback which they use to refine and improve their work well.

The school promotes an enjoyment of reading effectively and most pupils make good progress in the development of their reading skills. Teachers plan a wide range of meaningful writing activities that engage and interest pupils. During their time at the school, most pupils make good progress in the development of their writing skills. Teachers incorporate the use of digital technology through the curriculum well. By the time they leave school, most pupils develop a sound set of digital skills that they use routinely and confidently to complement their learning.

Across the school, teachers plan beneficial opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum. A revised approach to teaching mathematics is beginning to have a positive impact on younger pupils' understanding and use of number

in their play and during lessons. In the older classes, teachers do not consider the individual abilities of pupils well enough when planning mathematics activities. As a result, many older pupils do not receive the appropriate level of challenge or support.

Most teachers model spoken Welsh appropriately. They provide pupils with regular and useful opportunities to rehearse a range of Welsh words and sentence patterns. However, opportunities for pupils to apply this learning in conversation are limited and as a result, most pupils across the school, lack confidence when speaking Welsh.

There are a good range of opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills. They benefit from involvement in a wide range of active leadership groups. Links with local businesses and organisations provide useful opportunities for all pupils to learn about the world of work. The school has close links with other local schools and effective transition arrangements support pupils when joining the school and when moving to their next stage of education.

The governing body works closely with the school, providing appropriate challenge and support. This extends to ensuring that the well-being of both pupils and staff continue be a high priority. The school uses the pupil development grant appropriately to support effective family engagement work. Currently, the school is in a very difficult financial situation with a large deficit budget. Leaders are in the process of developing a financial recovery plan to present to the local authority.

The school maintains robust procedures for promoting the importance of regular school attendance and overall attendance at the school continues to improve.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for site management do not give any cause for concern.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

The school makes appropriate use of the pupil development grant. The school currently has a large deficit budget.

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.

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