

A report on

Bedwas Junior School

**Church Street
Bedwas
CF83 8EB**

Date of inspection: January 2026

by

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

About Bedwas Junior School

Name of provider	Bedwas Junior School
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	156
Pupils of statutory school age	156
Number in nursery classes	
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 21.7%)	15.5%
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 9.2%)	20.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/05/2023

A report on Bedwas Junior School
January 2026

Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/03/2017
Start date of inspection	19/01/2026

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

Pupils enjoy attending Bedwas Junior School. They benefit from an inclusive and welcoming learning environment. Most pupils are keen to learn and behave well, showing respect to others. There are positive working relationships between pupils and staff. Staff support pupils' well-being effectively so that they feel safe and well cared for. Most pupils listen attentively, follow instructions carefully and communicate confidently about their work.

Leaders do not currently provide effective strategic direction for the school's work. Overall, they do not use processes, such as self-evaluation well enough to ensure that teaching supports pupils to make the progress they could. Teachers' expectations and provision for pupils' progress in the development of important skills, in lessons and over time, are not high enough. Too much teaching does not engage or sustain pupils' interests well enough. This means that, too often, rates of progress, including those of pupils from low-income households, are too low.

Aspects of the school's work are effective. These include provision for pupils with additional learning needs and the school's work to nurture positive attitudes to reading amongst pupils and to develop their skills as competent and confident readers. Most pupils make suitable progress in developing their physical, creative and digital skills. Pupils' progress in their development as writers is generally slow. Many pupils enjoy mathematics, but teaching does not support them to make the progress they could or ensure that they have enough opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum. Pupils' progress in learning Welsh is intermittent.

The school has appropriate safeguarding arrangements. However, processes to monitor and improve rates of attendance are not robust. Too many pupils do not attend school often enough.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Improve leadership at all levels to ensure that self-evaluation and improvement processes have a consistently positive impact on pupils' progress
- R2 Ensure teaching consistently provides the right level of challenge for pupils
- R3 Develop an engaging curriculum that meets requirements and enables pupils to develop a breadth of skills that they can apply independently across their learning
- R4 Improve rates of attendance, including for those from low-income households

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion, that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress usually every four to six months.

Main evaluation

Bedwas Junior School is welcoming and inclusive. Most pupils have a positive attitude to learning, and pride in their achievements. The positive relationships between pupils and staff are a strong feature of the school and support pupils' well-being effectively. In general, staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Most pupils behave well and conduct themselves appropriately around the school.

Overall, school leaders do not provide effective strategic leadership for the school's work. Processes to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching are underdeveloped and do not identify the aspects of teaching in need of most improvement. This limits leaders' capacity to ensure that teaching supports pupils, including those from low-income household, to make the progress they could during their time at school. Currently, staff beyond the leadership team do not have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to evaluation and improvement work.

Aspects of the school's work are notable strengths. These include provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). Staff undertake valuable professional learning that improves their skills in supporting these pupils. There are appropriate processes to identify pupils' ALN, provide targeted support and track progress. This ensures that most pupils with ALN make suitable progress towards their individual targets.

Most pupils develop as confident and capable communicators. They speak with clarity when explaining their work and engage sensibly in discussions with their peers. Teachers place a strong emphasis on developing pupils' enjoyment of reading. They regularly share class novels and use stories effectively as a stimulus for learning across the curriculum. This has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes, and many pupils develop a love of reading. Many pupils read fluently from a range of suitably challenging texts. Staff teach reading strategies purposefully and use questioning and discussion effectively to support pupils' understanding. However, reading activities do not always provide sufficient challenge for more able pupils.

In other aspects of provision for skills, leaders have not ensured that there is a clear understanding of expectations for learning and progress. This is most evident in the teaching of writing, mathematics and Welsh.

Most pupils have regular opportunities to write for an appropriate range of purposes, including letters, poems and newspaper reports. Pupils are beginning to recognise and apply features of different text types. Overall though, most pupils' progress in writing is too slow. The content and structure of their writing is generally underdeveloped. Opportunities for pupils to edit and redraft their work are too infrequent. There is not

enough focus on improving the quality of pupils' writing. Standards of presentation are too variable across the school.

Many pupils make suitable progress in developing aspects of their mathematics and numeracy skills. They show positive attitudes towards mathematics and, with support, develop an appropriate understanding of place value and basic number skills. However, the level of challenge does not meet the needs of more able pupils well enough. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to learn about shape, space, measure and data handling in mathematics lessons and in work across the curriculum.

Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning Welsh, and many ask and answer questions with support. However, provision is inconsistent and lacks clear progression. This means that pupils' progress is intermittent.

Across the school, most pupils use digital resources confidently and purposefully to support and consolidate their learning. They also make suitable progress in developing their physical and creative skills.

Most teachers use questioning well to encourage pupils to share ideas and to check understanding and often address misconceptions as they arise. However, in a majority of lessons, there are important weaknesses in teaching. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not ambitious enough. Too many lessons include activities that lack purpose and challenge. This results in a slow pace of learning. Pupils frequently spend extended periods listening to adults or completing over-directed tasks. Pupils have too few opportunities to develop independence and, in too many instances, they disengage with their learning.

The school does not have a suitable structure to enable teachers to plan for developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills over time, or how pupils can apply these skills across other areas of their curriculum. This reduces teachers' ability to rigorously plan for, and track, pupils' progress over time. As a result, leaders do not have a clear enough overview of the progress pupils make.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils are respectful and considerate towards staff and their peers. Staff treat pupils with care and kindness, and pupils feel safe, respected and well cared for. Leaders have appropriate systems in place to support pupils' well-being, including access to a calm zone and flexible lunchtime arrangements for those who need them.

Across the school, pupils have opportunities to take on leadership roles, including those who are eligible for free school meals and those with ALN. However, pupil leadership

groups have limited impact on school improvement. Opportunities for pupils to have a say in what they learn and how they learn are underdeveloped. Nearly all pupils participate in valuable transition activities when joining the school and in preparation for their secondary schools. Enhanced transition arrangements support vulnerable pupils' well-being effectively.

Governors are enthusiastic and committed to the school. However, they receive limited information and consequently they are unable to hold leaders to account effectively. Leaders do not track the progress of individual pupils or groups well enough to enable them to evaluate the impact of grant funding. This includes the Pupil Development Grant. Leaders do not know how effective the use of this grant has been in mitigating the impact of socio-economic disadvantage.

Leaders have established a suitable culture of safeguarding with robust child protection procedures. Staff understand and follow procedures appropriately. The school responds promptly to pupil absence. However, leaders do not track or address attendance patterns and persistent absence well enough, particularly for pupils from low-income households. As a result, too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This has a negative impact on their learning.

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.

Currently the school is in a deficit budget and working with the local authority to address this issue. Arrangements to evaluate the effectiveness of expenditure linked to the pupil development grant are not robust enough.

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

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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales

© Crown Copyright 2026: This report may be re used free of charge: (a) in any format or medium; and (b) may be translated by or on behalf of an education and/or training provider in respect of which this report relates into any language, in each case provided that it is re used and/or translated accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must, in each case (including in the case of a translation) be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 23/03/2026