



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

A report on

Dewstow Primary School

**Woodland View
Caldicot
Newport
Monmouthshire
NP26 4EE**

Date of inspection: May 2022

by

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

About Dewstow Primary School

Name of provider	Dewstow Primary School
Local authority	Monmouthshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	261
Pupils of statutory school age	182
Number in nursery classes	49
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 [SECTOR] is [xx]%)	28%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in [SECTOR] is [xx]%)	32.4%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	6.6%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	September 2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/10/2013
Start date of inspection	23/05/2022
*	

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

Dewstow Primary is an inclusive school that places a strong emphasis on supporting the well-being of its pupils and engaging well with their families. Leaders and staff at all levels provide a warm and welcoming learning environment for pupils that is set out over four plazas, each containing two year groups of pupils.

In these vibrant learning spaces, staff collaborate well to promote a sense of community and belonging. However, across these spaces and the wider school, there is too much variation in their approaches to teaching and learning. Often, teachers' expectations are too low and most lessons are not well-paced. Teachers do not inform pupils well enough about what they need to do next to improve their work.

Leaders, staff and the governing body are starting to work closely with parents to improve the culture of reading across the school. As a result, many pupils are now starting to make strong progress from their starting points. Parents appreciate the opportunities to be involved in their children's learning. However, there is too little focus on improving pupils' skills across the curriculum as leaders do not evaluate their progress well enough or the quality of the school's provision.

The school is beginning to develop its approach to the Curriculum for Wales and is working well with other schools. However, the planning for and design of the school's curriculum, as well as the mapping of skills to ensure pupil progress, is at a very early stage.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve leadership at all levels
- R2 Improve evaluation and improvement processes
- R3 Improve the quality of teaching and learning experiences across the school
- R4 Plan for the progressive and systematic development of pupils' skills across the curriculum, including regular opportunities for them to develop their writing skills
- R5 Strengthen assessment processes and feedback to pupils
- R6 Provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop pupils as independent learners
- R7 Improve pupils' progress in Welsh and support them to apply their skills across the school

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 to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress on a termly basis.

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils start in the nursery with skills in language and mathematical development at or above the level expected for their stage. As they move through the school, many pupils, including those who are vulnerable or have additional learning needs, generally make expected progress from their starting points.

Many of the youngest pupils are often confident when speaking to an adult and are keen to ask questions or explain what they are doing. Most pupils listen attentively to their teachers' instructions and wait their turn to read their names during registration sessions. Pupils in reception class talk about matters of interest while pupils in Years 1 and 2 are keen to share their views. By Years 5 and 6, the majority of pupils discuss in small groups the best features of a local outdoor pursuits centre they visit and explore ways of marketing the venue to attract more visitors.

Across the school, most pupils' reading skills are developing well and this is a noticeable strength in pupil outcomes. Many pupils talk about how much they value books and relish the time they spend reading for pleasure. In reception class, many pupils focus enthusiastically when learning letter sounds or reading simple words. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 read simple texts well as they develop sound phonological skills, which they transfer to their own writing with increasing accuracy. Many pupils in Years 3 and 4 develop their reading skills consistently and apply them when reading new words or discussing characters in a book. These pupils understand why writers use features, such as alliteration, to make reading exciting. By Years 5 and 6, many pupils read with accuracy and locate information in texts precisely.

Many pupils make suitable progress in developing their writing skills, particularly with support from an adult or writing structure. In nursery and reception classes, many pupils enjoy early mark making, while those in Years 1 and 2 begin to write poetry, make fact sheets about the planets and write newspaper articles about the great fire of London. Many pupils in Years 3 and 4 re-tell the Easter story and begin to write letters. By Years 5 and 6, many pupils write simple biographies of famous Welsh people, such as the artist Gwilym Pritchard and describe the Jewish festival of Hannukah. Over time and with support, many pupils develop their ability to write in a range of genres, often deconstructing a piece of writing to discover the main characteristics before creating their own piece of work. However, outside of these direct teaching sessions, and on too many occasions, nearly all pupils do not apply and consolidate their writing skills well enough. As a result, pupils do not develop their creative or extended writing skills across the curriculum well enough.

Many pupils across the school make consistent progress in their mathematical and numeracy skills. Younger pupils join in with counting songs while many pupils in Year 1 know the pairs of numbers that go together to make 10. In Year 2, most pupils double and halve numbers successfully, read temperatures with negative numbers and compile tally charts of their friends' favourite drinks. Many pupils in Years 3 and 4 work with numbers up to 1,000, calculate area or rectangles and measure volume and angles with increasing preciseness. By Years 5 and 6, the majority enjoy exploring algebra and many pupils extend their knowledge to work out the area of

triangles. While many pupils develop these skills in their structured and focused lessons, their ability to apply these skills across the wider curriculum and into real contexts is limited.

Pupils do not develop their skills sufficiently when using the Welsh language across the school. In nursery and reception classes, pupils greet adults with 'bore da' and listen and respond appropriately to staff's simple instructions in Welsh. As pupils progress through the school, they learn simple vocabulary and basic sentence patterns, and by Year 6 the majority talk about the weather. However, nearly all pupils have limited vocabulary and sentence patterns which restricts their ability to speak Welsh with increased confidence. As a result, their Welsh language skills are underdeveloped.

Across the school, pupils' progress in their digital skills is variable. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 create a simple bar graph to show what their friends like to do and store their work successfully. In Years 3 and 4, many pupils are confident using their coding skills and as a team, persevere effectively to complete tasks. By Years 5 and 6, most pupils present information digitally to an audience, often collaborating on-line to create a presentation or a short digital movie.

Many pupils develop their artistic skills is variable across the school. Most younger pupils are confident to make models, and pupils in Year 2 decorate pencil pots they have made from a single-use plastic bottle. Many pupils in Years 3 and 4 understand the effect of shade and tone. Many older pupils learn about Welsh artists and copy their styles precisely, for example through their exploration of the work of Rhiannon Roberts. However, most pupils do not apply their creative skills successfully in other areas of the curriculum.

Many pupils develop their physical skills well. The youngest children are confident using steps to climb upstairs when playing in their home corner and persevere when using tweezers to pick up small minibeasts from a jungle of leaves. A few pupils in Years 1 and 2 play games, such as hopscotch and twister with increasing control, while nearly all of the oldest pupils benefit from regular practice of their swimming skills.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are kind and respectful to each other and adults. They feel safe in school and know who they can talk to if they have concerns and respond well to adults. Nearly all pupils engage in valuable activities such as class reflection time, personal gratitude journals and worry books.

Pupils are proud to have input into the variety of clubs that are available to them. Many enjoy attending a range of differing extra-curricular clubs, including the choir, netball, dance and movement, arts and crafts and others, appealing to the diverse range of pupil interests. As a result, most pupils demonstrate a good understanding of healthy choices, for example through regular exercise to support their physical well-being.

Across the school, many pupils are developing a sound understanding of cultural diversity and they show care and concern for others. They are beginning to

appreciate a range of ethical concerns facing the world and importantly, they increasingly use this knowledge to inform their own personal choices. For example, pupils request that leaders reduce the use of single-use or non-recyclable materials used at school and encourage their families to buy items that are free of plastic packaging.

Many pupils engage in activities that develop their awareness and understanding of important topical and current affairs by watching and discussing daily news programmes. In their discussions, pupil reflections show empathy and concern for others. They confidently offer their views when discussing the impact of war on children, using their knowledge of the rights of the child.

Pupils have positive attitudes towards one and another. Nearly all pupils collaborate well together, often supporting each other with encouraging words and helping hands in these situations. Within all plazas, the majority of pupils show appropriate levels of engagement in their work and focus on their activities with eagerness. However, a minority of pupils do not sustain this and lose interest quickly. As a result, over time they do not make the expected progress in their work due to lack of interest in what they are doing. They are not involved often enough in making decisions about what and how they would like to learn.

Most pupils are beginning to respond appropriately to verbal feedback provided by teachers and a few respond keenly to their suggestions. Pupils are at an early stage in reflecting on their own progress but are keen to develop their skills. In addition, they are starting to work more closely with their peers on different approaches to move their learning on. However, nearly all pupils across the plazas are not yet confident in doing this as they are not yet familiar enough with using these approaches.

All pupils contribute to class charters within their learning plazas. They work together well to promote the key values of 'reach for the stars' and 'be respectful, resilient and ready'. These values are understood and embraced by all at the school. Most pupils behave well as they work in their classes, they move around the school calmly and co-operate with one and other at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Nearly all pupils respond well to the staff who help them to change and improve their behaviour when they need to. The working relationships between pupils as well as with staff demonstrate strong levels of trust and mutual respect.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report on pupils' rates of attendance during the academic year 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

All staff work together successfully to build positive working relationships with pupils, creating welcoming, purposeful, and supportive learning environments. This supports pupils to take part in new experiences confidently and to ask purposeful questions in lessons. All teachers use the skills of support staff effectively, and these adults make a beneficial contribution to pupils' learning, for example during targeting interventions. Generally, teachers plan learning activities that build upon prior

learning sufficiently. However, across the school, the quality of teaching varies and in too many classes, expectations of pupils are not always high enough. As a result, pupils are not always engaged or challenged well enough to make solid progress in their learning.

In a few classes, teachers modify tasks effectively to match the needs of pupils of differing abilities. However, in many cases, the pace of learning is too slow and there is an inappropriate balance between adult led and pupil led activities. As a result, most pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop as independent learners and are unable to complete tasks to an appropriate standard without adult support. Across the school there is an emphasis on indoor led activities and a limited use of the generous outdoor areas, especially with regards to enhanced provision. As a result, the current provision does not fulfil the foundation phase principles well enough.

Most teachers provide timely and encouraging oral feedback to pupils during lessons. However, teacher feedback is inconsistent and generally, written comments are not helpful enough to enable pupils to improve their work. Teachers use learning objectives systematically to ensure pupils understanding of the context of their work. However, assessment for learning strategies are underdeveloped and teachers rarely give sufficient opportunities for pupils to self assess their own work, peer assess or respond to marking and feedback. As a result, the marking and feedback have little impact on pupil progress.

The school makes ineffective use of assessment procedures to track pupil progress in learning as they journey through the school. There are regular pupil progress meetings that include leaders, class teachers and the ALNCo. These meetings discuss the progress and well-being of individual pupils and, if required, how provision can be adapted to support improvement. However, the assessments tend to be over generous and do not reflect the correct standards of pupils' progress and, as a result, the school is not aware of the progress groups of pupils make, such as pupils at risk of underachievement or those who are more able.

In the short term, teachers plan comprehensively for the development of pupils' English reading skills and the progress pupils have made in this area are strong. However, the planning and provision to develop pupils' Welsh skills are underdeveloped. Across the school, the provision to nurture pupils' Welsh oral, reading and writing skills are very limited and, as a result, pupils only have a basic understanding of vocabulary that is used incidentally. Generally, pupils do not make adequate progress in developing Welsh as a second language.

Teachers make useful long-term plans that provide a basic framework for the curriculum as pupils move through the school. These plans take note of the national literacy and numeracy framework but do not consider the digital competency framework. Curriculum plans do not identify areas to develop pupils' skills such as opportunities for pupils to write extensively well enough. Inconsistencies in delivering these suitable learning experiences mean that these opportunities do not always build upon pupils' skills systematically to secure progression in lessons and over time. For example, teachers set tasks that are inappropriate for pupils' stage of learning and do not give enough opportunities to develop pupils' skills meaningfully across the curriculum.

Preparation for the new Curriculum for Wales is at an early stage of development. Teachers are beginning on their journey to shape their planning and consider the four purposes and the areas of learning and experience.

End of year reports to parents contain useful information about their child's learning and suggest helpful ways they can support progress at home.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring and supportive community with a welcoming environment where pupil and family well-being are of prime importance. Staff work well as a team to promote the strong culture of well-being, and this permeates throughout the school. The learning environment is a system of plazas, each housing two classes, with break out spaces, cwtch areas, libraries and a science and technology hub. Staff use these clean, bright and spacious areas effectively to deliver appropriate nurture and support programmes to those pupils in need of support. However, staff do not make enough use of the outside classroom, for example the exterior play and learning areas that include designated outdoor class areas, a forest school and an outdoor gym to promote learning and the development of physical skills. In the inside classroom, staff use a wide range of nurture support for individuals and groups which promote and support positive emotional and social well-being. Many pupils benefit from this provision at different stages of their development in school.

During the pandemic, the school saw the well-being of pupils and their families as a high priority and family engagement remains a strong focus of the work of the school. For example, senior leaders prioritise reading support and provide guidance for pupils and their parents on how to work together. This results in strong home school collaboration and is strengthening the reading culture of the school.

The school makes appropriate use of a range of processes to identify pupils in need of additional support to make effective progress in their learning. Teachers and support staff work within their teams to provide individual and small group targeted support programmes for literacy and emotional well-being. Key members of staff work with pupils and their families to create and develop personal profiles and plans. These plans support nearly all pupils in many areas of their learning and emotional development. A very few pupils have individual plans which identify clear targets for action at their termly progress review meetings. Currently, the tracking of progress for all pupils is insufficient and does not clearly identify the progress pupils make from their starting points. As a result, leaders and staff lack an understanding of pupil progress, the effectiveness of the strategies and the next steps for support.

Staff work well with a wide range of outside agencies to provide a variety of supportive provision for individual pupils, such as speech and language support, the educational psychologist and play therapists. They work closely with parents to provide support for literacy targets for pupils with additional learning needs. This has a positive impact on both well-being and literacy support.

Pupils recognise the school's inclusive ethos and are proud to have responsibilities within the school. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities to contribute to a wide range of pupil voice groups. For example, the sport ambassadors meet with pupil groups from other schools and discuss plans for future sport events to ensure that

there are other fun activities to encourage wider participation in health-promoting physical activity. Recently, members of the school council contributed to the appointment process for a new member of staff.

The school provides a suitable range of opportunities and activities to help pupils to develop an appreciation and understanding of their own identity, heritage and culture. For example, pupils learn about places in Wales and visit sites such as Caldicot Castle to learn about its long and rich history. Within each of the four learning plazas, staff and pupils hold their own range of celebratory events where they invite their parents to share and celebrate their learning experiences, for example the recent eisteddfod celebrations.

Staff provide beneficial opportunities to contribute to pupils' understanding of spiritual and ethical beliefs through its assemblies and reflection time. With encouragement, pupils support and help each other and have consideration for others. Pupils consider how they can raise funds for national charities, and they visit pensioners in the community to sing songs and play board games.

Leaders effectively promote a strong culture of safeguarding, with governors and all who work at the school supporting this well. Leaders follow up absences in a timely manner and work well with local authority officers. Staff know whom they should speak to if they have a cause for concern and clearly understand the procedures they should follow. As a result, nearly all pupils feel safe at the school and understand the importance of regular attendance.

Leadership and management

Currently, the acting headteacher is steering the school through a difficult period of change and uncertainty following significant changes to longstanding leadership. As a result, this year the school is undergoing significant staffing changes, including within the senior leadership team. Underpinning this is a team of experienced and supportive teachers and teaching assistants who are effective at supporting pupil well-being. The acting headteacher promotes a culture of partnership working between all staff at the school and parents to support pupils in their progress and well-being. Parents are particularly appreciative of this and many are grateful for the support the school provides, not just for its pupils, but also their families, notably in challenging periods during the pandemic.

Recently, all staff at the school have begun to work effectively with members of the governing body on an enquiry-based project to develop pupils' skills and outcomes in reading. Parents are pleased with this work and the benefits it is having on reading development as well as enjoyment of reading as they benefit from support in helping their child read. In addition, staff work well together in small teams to share good practice, as well as involving parents who support their children well with reading at home. However, this work is at an early stage of development and is not yet embedded as common practice within the school. Staff are beginning to re-engage with colleagues in its cluster of schools to improve teachers' awareness of the Curriculum for Wales.

The school is beginning to sharpen its monitoring work and leaders are now using a focused calendar of activity to gather first-hand evidence on its performance in

important aspects of its work. Staff in key roles work with leaders to produce a context of the school's current provision. However, these activities lack depth and robustness and consequently they do not reflect purposefully enough on the strengths and areas for development the school needs to make in relation to improving outcomes for pupils. As a result of underdeveloped self-evaluation processes, the school's planned improvement priorities do not match the extent of the shortcomings in provision, which in turn hamper pupil progress in too many areas of the school's work. For example, standards of teaching and feedback to pupils are inconsistent within classes and are not of a high enough standard. As a result, leaders have not addressed these inconsistencies, which lead to too much variation within classes and across the school.

Leaders monitor the school's budget and allocate the spending of the pupil development grant on staffing to support pupil progress and well-being. Pupils benefit from the support they receive in their lessons, but on too many occasions they often rely on adults and this inhibits their independence. Leaders do not monitor well enough the impact this grant has upon targeted pupils.

Since the school's last inspection, there has been insufficient focus by leaders on maintaining the progress made against the recommendations for improvement. Therefore, the school does not have a proven track record in sustaining and further developing itself. This is evident in its impact on impeding the development of the important skills pupils need to acquire and to apply in meaningful situations, such as in literacy, numeracy, digital and Welsh language skills. In addition, the school is at an early stage with its progress towards implementation of the Curriculum for Wales. Currently, the school's vision for the curriculum lacks clarity and strategic direction. As such, it does not provide a framework for the systematic progression of pupils' skills. Consequently, pupils do not have opportunity to develop their range of skills well enough.

Governors are keen to support the school and meet regularly to monitor the school's finances and discuss the budget. However, they are aware that the school continues, and over a period of many years, to carry forward too much of its financial resources. They challenge leaders on the validity of not spending money to bring about improvements in a timely enough manner. Governors visit the school and attend training to fulfil their role in guiding the school's strategic direction and acting as a critical friend. However, these processes lack vigor as they are not fully aware of the true picture of the school, the progress pupils make and its prospects for improvement. Despite this, governors meet their statutory duties, for example in reviewing statutory policies, promoting a culture of safeguarding, and healthy eating and drinking. In addition, governors are beginning to develop their own mechanism for delivering their annual report to parents.

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

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