



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

A report on

Monnow Primary School

**Darent Close
Newport
NP20 7SQ**

Date of inspection: February 2023

by

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

About Monnow Primary school

Name of provider	Monnow Primary School
Local authority	Newport City Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	374
Pupils of statutory school age	272
Number in nursery classes	56
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%)	47.7%
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%)	57.7%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	3.7%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	23/02/2015
Start date of inspection	27/02/2023

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

Many pupils start Monnow Primary School with underdeveloped social and communication skills. From these starting points, they often make strong progress in their development as learners and members of the school community. They engage positively with the wide range of experiences that the school provides. Across the school, pupils' behaviour and engagement during periods of independent and unsupervised learning are extremely good. This is a direct result of the influence of the school's learning environment, relationships between staff and pupils, and the quality and relevance of teaching and the curriculum. These factors combine to foster a very strong sense of 'cynefin' (belonging) amongst pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) in mainstream classes and the school's learning resource bases.

Approaches to teaching match pupils' developmental needs well throughout their time at school. In particular, they receive regular opportunities to learn through engaging practical activities and play experiences both indoors and outside. Teachers develop most aspects of pupils' skills progressively and successfully as they move through school. The approach to developing pupils' communication and reading skills is particularly effective. This nurtures a real enjoyment of reading. For older pupils, this often includes classic literature. Pupils develop good numeracy and digital skills and apply these well in their work across the curriculum. However, the school's provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is less successful.

Leaders and staff understand the needs of pupils, their families and the local community very well. They are determined to ensure that pupils achieve good levels of well-being, for example by supporting pupils to develop strategies to help them regulate their emotions and through effective work with parents and a variety of external support agencies. Leaders ensure a strong safeguarding culture at the school. They promote the importance of regular attendance at school and monitor all absences carefully. However, rates of pupils' attendance remain relatively low.

The headteacher provides highly effective leadership. In a relatively short period of time, in collaboration with a skilled and committed team, she has developed a vibrant learning community. Staff feel valued. They are empowered to make decisions and take actions that are in the best interests of pupils. Leaders implement improvement strategy successfully. This is evident in many ways, including the development of the school's curriculum, improvements to provision to develop pupils' skills and adaptations to the learning environment to facilitate positive behaviour and engagement. They generally support improvement work well with professional learning. Leaders evaluate many aspects of the school's work effectively to identify opportunities for further improvement. However, in a few instances, they have not identified opportunities to further develop the skills of teachers and teaching assistants, for example to help them become more aware of how and when to intervene in learning experiences to enhance learning.

Recommendations

R1 Improve attendance

R2 Improve standards in Welsh

R3 Further develop professional learning to improve consistency of teaching and the work of teaching assistants

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to the effectiveness of the learning environment in supporting pupils to develop their skills, confidence and independence and the use of literature to inspire a curriculum, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

When they first join the school, many pupils have skills, knowledge and understanding that are lower than would normally be expected for their age. During their time at school, they make considerable progress overall. Specific groups of pupils such as those with additional learning needs (ALN) make sound progress in accordance with their individual targets.

In the learning resource bases, pupils develop their communication skills well from their starting points. They recognise high frequency words and are developing sound strategies to help them read. Many older pupils in the resource base class begin to understand how to build a sentence both orally and in writing. They understand a few grammatical features, such as how to use time connectives. In relation to their starting points, many of these pupils make sound progress developing their mathematical understanding.

Over time, many pupils make very strong progress in developing and using their oracy skills. In the early years, they quickly begin to develop their confidence as speakers. They listen well to others and respond appropriately to questions. By Year 6, many speak with confidence and fluency.

Many pupils develop positive attitudes to reading and thoroughly enjoy stories and the rich texts that the school provides. The youngest pupils listen to and discuss stories enthusiastically with staff and gain pleasure from selecting books from the book corner. By Year 2, many pupils develop positive reading behaviours and valuable skills, for example the ability to retrieve key information from texts. Many older pupils read in various contexts with appropriate expression and fluency, varying their tone of voice and using punctuation correctly to show their understanding. A few older pupils talk knowledgably and in great depth about challenging texts they have read such as adaptations of Hamlet and Alice in Wonderland.

Many younger pupils develop their early writing skills well and begin to understand that writing conveys meaning and has a purpose. By Year 2, many pupils use varied vocabulary and language patterns to write short stories and letters. As pupils progress from Year 3 to Year 6, many write independently in a wide range of authentic contexts. For example, they write an informative text based on their enquiry questions, such as 'what was health and healthcare like before the NHS?' However, across the school, there are too few opportunities for pupils to write creatively at length, for example through writing imaginative, extended stories.

In general, pupils have a positive attitude towards learning about Wales and the Welsh language. Younger pupils develop their Welsh language skills appropriately. They join in enthusiastically in songs and rhymes in Welsh. A majority of pupils respond appropriately to instructions given in Welsh and begin to build a useful vocabulary. A minority of pupils respond appropriately using common words and phrases. Overall though, pupils do not make enough progress in developing their Welsh language skills.

Many pupils make strong progress in developing their mathematical skills and understanding. For example, a majority of younger pupils count confidently to 10 and back to 0 and most older pupils develop a good understanding of how to calculate averages. They use number operations successfully and develop a good understanding of shape and angles during practical activities. When given the opportunity, many pupils use their numeracy skills in engaging activities across the curriculum. For example, pupils create their own wigwam village using their measuring skills to calculate the height, width and area of each wigwam.

Overall, many pupils develop and use a good range of digital skills. For example, older pupils use the internet efficiently to research their enquiry questions. They create interesting animations based on their poems about Wales, adding their voice, music and pictures. Many older pupils co-operate effectively to create and edit documents simultaneously. They demonstrate good coding skills, for instance to programme the movements of a robot.

Most pupils' creative skills are developing well. Younger pupils use paint to create landscape scenes, showing their understanding of colour tones, such as cool and warm colours in their work to create a sunset. Older pupils reflect on how famous artists communicate their feelings and ideas through their art, emulating their style and use of colours and tone to express their own ideas creatively.

Across the school, many pupils are enthusiastic about physical activity and develop their skills well through a variety of experiences. Younger pupils show effective body management and balance, for example to make themselves taller or smaller during PE sessions and develop their fine motor skills well by using real tools, nails and screws to create a model of a dragon from their story.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils develop a strong sense of belonging to the school. They respect and trust the staff around them and know who to turn to for support when they need it. They are confident that they will be listened to, and that staff will help them to resolve issues that arise fairly.

Overall, most pupils behave well. They are polite and treat each other and adults with respect. The high standard of pupils' behaviour during periods of independent and unsupervised learning is extremely good. This exemplifies the positive attitudes to learning that they develop over time and the effectiveness of the school's culture, teaching and curriculum. Across the school many pupils are developing the skills they need to take responsibility for their own learning. For example, during 'Footstep Friday' sessions, older pupils learn to reflect on how well they have completed different tasks and how to refine their work in response to feedback from staff.

Most pupils engage positively with the broad range of learning experiences that school offers. They generally settle quickly to work or play and persevere to complete tasks and activities. Younger pupils show high levels of enthusiasm for practical learning, for example during woodwork activity, block play and opportunities to visit the forest school provision. Pupils' attitudes to learning are less positive during the few teaching sessions that lack appropriate pace or where the content and style of delivery does not hold their interest well enough.

Most pupils are keen to discuss their learning. For example, pupils in the school's learning resource base talk animatedly about the powers possessed by different characters they have drawn. Older pupils in mainstream classes explain the thinking behind their moving model robots in great detail and with pride.

Pupils have an active voice in the life and work of the school. They support the school's improvement journey well. For example, they help to address important issues such as behaviour at playtimes through the work of the 'Playmakers'. Pupils work purposefully with governors to evaluate aspects of the school's provision, such as the learning environment and the development of reading skills. The 'Super Ambassadors' lead assemblies that focus on important issues such as children's mental health and children's rights. They develop their understanding of sustainability issues well, for instance when learning about the costs of using domestic appliances. Most older pupils are aware of how to stay safe online.

Most pupils understand that exercise and a healthy diet are important. They develop their understanding of healthy food through their curriculum work and engage enthusiastically in physical activity in PE lessons, active play sessions and in after-school activity clubs. Rates of pupils' attendance are low and give cause for concern.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school's curriculum meets the needs and interests of pupils very well. Learning normally stems from rich texts that hook children's enthusiasm successfully. Teachers use these texts as a gateway to create relevant learning experiences that relate well to pupils' experiences as a child growing up in Bettws. They skilfully select texts that contain characters and contexts that pupils relate to and that spark their imagination and curiosity. Teachers personalise lessons and activities according to the needs and interests of their class. They create sequences of learning that often culminate in a 'showcase' of what has been learnt or experienced. These events and the curriculum overall provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop a powerful sense of 'cynefin' (belonging).

Teachers' planning ensures that most pupils have opportunities to use their skills across the curriculum in a range of interesting contexts. Teachers plan particularly skilfully to improve pupils' oracy and reading skills by providing regular opportunities for them to read and respond, in depth, to high quality texts. This supports very good rates of progress, promotes the value of reading for enjoyment and nurtures a love of reading in many pupils. Provision to develop pupils' writing skills is successful overall. However, teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to write at length creatively.

Teachers' systematic approach to supporting pupils' mathematical development enables pupils to apply and embed their skills in engaging contexts across the curriculum both indoors and outside. Pupils receive beneficial opportunities to develop and apply a broad range of digital skills. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' understanding of the culture and heritage of Wales. However, overall, teachers do not develop pupils' Welsh language skills well enough. Teachers ensure that pupils have ample opportunity to engage with creative experiences and develop a wider range of skills, for example through music sessions and outdoor learning experiences.

Relationships between staff and pupils are extremely positive and productive. Staff know the pupils well and use this knowledge to develop a highly engaging learning environment. Teachers use an effective range of approaches to try to maximise pleasure in learning, for example by providing pupils with opportunities to plan their own learning and applying enquiry questions to projects and topics. Generally, teaching supports pupils to develop well as independent and confident learners, particularly when taking into consideration their starting points.

Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning effectively to support learning. Through regular, clear verbal and written feedback, they ensure that pupils are aware of how to develop their learning. Staff use assessment information well to plan for next steps in learning and to design their learning environment and experiences. Generally, teachers have high expectations for all pupils and ensure that learning moves forward at a good pace. However, in a few instances, teachers and teaching assistants provide too much direction during learning experiences. At other times, they do not intervene at appropriate points to move learning on.

In the learning resource base, staff know their pupils well and create positive working relationships. They have well-established routines that pupils know and understand. Overall, they model language well and provide pupils with appropriate opportunities to practise and rehearse prior to writing. All staff are good language models and help pupils to build their vocabulary, both verbally and through sign language. Generally, they plan appropriate activities that involve pupils in making choices and being active in their learning.

Care, support and guidance

The school provides effective care, support and guidance for pupils. Staff understand the importance of getting this fundamental aspect of the school's work right for the pupils and the community that the school serves. They are committed and determined to ensure that pupils achieve good levels of well-being. This provision paves the way for pupils to engage positively with school life and to make progress in their learning and wider development. For example, it supports pupils to develop a strong sense of belonging to the school and to develop the skills they need to regulate their emotions successfully. Staff enhance this work successfully by inviting parents into the school for 'stay and play' sessions, to learn about the school's methods of teaching mathematics and for special occasions, such as the Year 2 'Community Cwtsh' event.

The school places a high priority on meeting pupils' social and emotional needs from a very young age. They do this successfully by developing positive and respectful relationships with pupils and families and by working consistently as a dedicated team to provide a supportive and nurturing climate. For example, in all classes, staff provide safe spaces where pupils can choose to go when they are anxious or upset. A strength of the school is the consistency with which staff support pupils, using positive strategies and language to help them to stay calm and follow agreed routines. Overall, staff manage pupils' behaviour sensitively and successfully.

The investment in and organisation of indoor and outdoor learning spaces complement the school's teaching and curriculum strategy very well. It supports pupils' well-being and development effectively by facilitating their development as

independent learners, for example through the creation of safe spaces that help pupils manage their emotions independently.

The school uses a range of information effectively to plan provision for pupils with ALN and for those who are vulnerable to underachievement. Teachers in mainstream classes and in the school's learning resource bases prepare useful one-page profiles and individual development plans. They implement these plans consistently to ensure that pupils make good progress in relation to their individual learning goals and developmental needs.

An extensive and effective range of intervention programmes provide a valuable boost to pupils' skill development, for instance to support them to improve their communication and interactions with others and their numeracy skills. The school's ALN co-ordinator monitors the difference that these interventions make to pupils' progress effectively. The ALN co-ordinator also facilitates useful professional learning for staff that helps them to meet the needs of pupils with ALN more successfully.

The school's curriculum provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to learn about diversity and inclusion, for example by learning about the work of Stonewall Cymru. Staff make effective use of the school's context to support pupils to learn about the culture and heritage of Bettws, Newport and Wales. For example, pupils learn about the Chartist movement and prepare for national celebrations, such as St David's Day, by learning about historic Welsh symbols and tales.

The curriculum provides valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about challenging stereotypes and to give informed opinions about right and wrong. Regular acts of collective worship provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to come together and reflect on important moral and social issues, such as how to be a good friend to others. This supports the school's ethos successfully.

Staff enrich the curriculum effectively with regular visits to places of interest and by inviting specialist providers into school, for example to enhance pupils' learning about light and sound. A range of after-school clubs and activities provide valuable opportunities for pupils to further develop their interests and their physical skills. These include football, rugby, construction and science club.

The school provides equal opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles, for instance within the many pupil voice groups. These arrangements provide an appropriate platform for pupils to influence the life and work of the school, for example to promote their rights in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, the work of the 'Cryw Cymraeg' helps to raise the profile of the Welsh language. However, this is at an earlier stage of development and influence.

The school has a strong and effective safeguarding culture that is well established. The considerable and successful work with agencies provides essential support to pupils and families. These agencies include local charities, youth work organisations, the police and social services. High levels of collaboration contribute effectively to the school's capacity to keep pupils safe whilst also meeting their social, emotional and educational needs.

School leaders monitor pupils' attendance diligently. However, despite this diligence, rates of attendance are generally low.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides clear, purposeful and effective leadership that has had a positive impact on the work of the school in a relatively short period. Together with the support of the deputy headteacher and members of the leadership team, the headteacher has developed a strong culture of collaboration and a sense of teamwork and care across the school. Leaders value and respect the contribution of all staff and set high expectations for themselves and others. They empower staff to innovate and take risks in their teaching and to provide a rich and exciting learning environment for all pupils. As a result, staff feel valued and strive to provide the best opportunities for pupils to become competent, enthusiastic and independent learners.

Leaders and staff understand the needs of pupils, their families and the local community well. They work effectively together to provide comprehensive provision to support them. Leaders have worked alongside stakeholders to create a clear and purposeful vision that focuses well on providing a rich curriculum that nurtures a sense of location and 'cynffin' (belonging), in pupils and staff. They communicate this vision very well, which ensures that everyone within the school community is focused on achieving the same aims and strategic objectives for the benefit of all pupils.

Leaders are fully aware of the impact of poverty on attainment and have robust and very effective processes in place to support pupils. The school uses the pupil development grant very well to ensure that learning experiences and the learning environment benefit vulnerable pupils.

The school's work with a local partnership support group and external agencies helps the leaders and staff to support the well-being of pupils and their families extremely well. For example, parents and carers visit the school weekly for a coffee morning where they can socialise with others as well as seeking advice and support whenever necessary. There are clear lines of communication between the school and the home so that parents and carers feel confident in raising any issues that may affect their child/children's learning and well-being.

Members of the governing body are kept well informed about the work of the school by the headteacher and other leaders. This, along with presentations from pupil voice groups and their regular visits to the school, helps them to develop a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They value the work of the whole staff and are particularly proud of the role it plays in supporting the needs of the local community. Governors make appropriate arrangements for healthy eating and drinking and support leaders to manage finances effectively in line with the school's priorities.

Leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have established purposeful monitoring processes to evaluate most aspects of the school's work to help identify what they are doing well and what needs improving. Leaders visit classrooms regularly to observe teaching and learning and work with staff to scrutinise books and analyse a range of data appropriately.

This provides leaders with valuable information that they generally use well to support plans for improvement. However, leaders occasionally do not focus sharply enough on identifying specific strengths or areas for improvement in the work of teachers and other staff, for example the over-direction by staff during the delivery of formal literacy programmes or the lack of subject knowledge when teaching Welsh.

In general, leaders link opportunities for professional learning appropriately with the needs of the school and the individual. For example, they encourage and facilitate opportunities for staff to progress in their careers by supporting teaching assistants to complete training to become qualified teachers whilst working at the school. Leaders identify beneficial opportunities to learn from good practice in other schools and work with external partners to support staff to implement changes to the school's provision. For example, foundation learning staff have benefited from working with others to develop their learning environments to better support pupils' independent learning skills. However, leaders do not always share good practice within the school well enough or prioritise important professional development opportunities to further improve important aspects of the provision and learning, for example by providing support for staff to become more proficient in teaching Welsh language skills or by ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants are more aware of how and when to intervene in the learning to develop pupils' understanding and thinking skills.

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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