



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

**A report on**  
**Somerton Primary School**

**Hawthorn Fosse**  
**Newport**  
**Newport**  
**Newport**  
**NP19 9AB**

**Date of inspection: February 2024**

**by**

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

## About Somerton Primary School

Name of provider	Somerton Primary School
Local authority	Newport City Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	176
Pupils of statutory school age	141
Number in nursery classes	19
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 23.7%)	38.8%
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 13.2%)	3.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	4.3%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	13.5%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2016
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/06/2019
Start date of inspection	19/02/2024

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](https://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

Somerton Primary School is federated with nearby Eveswell Primary School. They share an executive headteacher and a governing body. Both schools work together effectively to improve provision for pupils in a mutually beneficial way. For example, staff at Somerton support colleagues at Eveswell in developing nurture provision, while Eveswell shares its expertise in curriculum development.

Over recent years, leaders have worked hard to develop consistent approaches to teaching and learning through high expectation, teamworking and continual improvement. Recently, however, Somerton has experienced significant staff absence, which has impacted on this work. Staff work together to create a safe and supportive environment in which pupils blossom. The school's nurture provision is a notable feature of this work.

Staff know their pupils and their families well. As a result of these trusting relationships, pupils know who to turn to for help, should they need it. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Teachers and support staff endeavour to develop positive attitudes to inclusion. The school celebrates the diversity of its community and encourages pupils to develop an understanding of the heritage and culture of Wales.

During their time at the school, pupils develop their knowledge and skills well and make strong progress from their starting points. Teachers often use pupils' thoughts and ideas to create engaging lessons. However, the effectiveness of these lessons in ensuring that all pupils have a suitable level of challenge and engagement is too variable. Coupled with this, the learning environments, particularly in the younger classes, limit the opportunities for pupils to be curious and become independent learners.

The school encourages pupils to develop their interests well. There are a wide range of extra-curricular activities that encourage pupils to develop new skills and knowledge. In addition, the school arranges interesting places to visit to extend their learning. Staff are beginning to work with pupils to help them to develop their leadership skills through the various pupil voice groups and strengthen their voice in shaping their school.

## Recommendations

- R1 Improve the quality and consistency of teaching to ensure that all pupils have suitable challenge and are actively engaged in their learning
- R2 Improve the learning environments to support teaching, particularly for younger pupils to develop their independence and curiosity

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

### Learning

Most pupils begin school with skills and knowledge significantly below that expected for their age. Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make sound progress from these starting points.

While the youngest pupils often find it difficult to listen and speak confidently with adults, their speech, language and communication skills progress well as they move through the early years at school. Younger pupils generally listen attentively to adults and begin to pay more attention to classmates when discussing their learning. For instance, in Year 1, pupils provide constructive feedback to enhance each other's dance routines. Older pupils strengthen their speaking and listening skills and, with support from adults, start to articulate their ideas more clearly. For example, Year 5 pupils explain the negative impact of fast fashion on the environment and how recycling and reusing materials can prevent this.

Many pupils develop secure reading skills. Younger pupils gain a good grasp of letter sounds and how words convey meaning. Although a few struggle to decode unfamiliar words using their knowledge of phonics, they persevere and display positive attitudes towards reading and enjoy exploring books around the classroom. As they become more experienced readers, their ability to decode unfamiliar words improves, and by Year 6, most read with increasing expression and fluency. Many older pupils often demonstrate a good understanding of themes within texts. For example, they identify and explain how writers use similes to capture the reader's attention.

Pupils across the school make good progress in their writing skills. In the nursery, pupils begin to explore making marks and in Year 2 many write with purpose. For example, they create informative newspaper articles or describe engagingly their investigations into the environmental impact of fatbergs. By Years 3 and 4, pupils write suitably across the curriculum and, when opportunities arise, write imaginatively, such as creating poems linked to their class topic. However, pupils' creative writing skills and ability to redraft and improve their work are too limited. Many older pupils express their ideas imaginatively using a wide vocabulary to engage readers. For example, they create quality information texts about the significance of water in different faiths or write empathetically about the experiences of Katherine Johnson, one of NASA's first African American female scientists. While handwriting sometimes varies in quality, spelling is generally suitable to pupils' age and most present their work with care and pride, particularly in their topic books.

Across the school, pupils make suitable progress in their mathematics and numeracy skills. Nursery pupils develop an appropriate early understanding of number, they sing songs, count up to five and show this amount with their fingers. In Years 3 and 4, pupils have a good understanding of shape and space, they measure and estimate lengths carefully, and use co-ordinates accurately to draw 2-D shapes. Many older pupils multiply and divide larger numbers confidently, using suitable methods and apply their understanding of time to solve simple problems. However, older pupils do not apply their mathematics skills often enough to tackle problems in more challenging contexts.

Most pupils are developing a positive attitude towards learning Welsh. Younger pupils follow simple instructions in Welsh, and by Year 2, they confidently use a range of sentence patterns, such as when discussing the weather or describing their clothes. Older pupils' skills progress well, with many extending their sentences in response to more sophisticated questions from adults, for example when discussing science topics.

Overall, pupils' digital skills develop appropriately. Younger pupils use technology to present data and draw simple graphs, such as displaying information from a traffic survey. Older pupils are beginning to develop their understanding of coding by creating simple algorithms to support their design work. However, this is at an early stage of development and, in a few instances, older pupils struggle to use more advanced features of familiar software applications.

Overall, pupils' progress in developing thinking and problem-solving skills is variable. When they have the opportunity, pupils solve problems systematically, such as calculating the area of Roman baths. However, generally, pupils' discussion, thinking skills and ability to collaborate effectively with others to solve more challenging problems are underdeveloped across classes.

Pupils' physical skills develop suitably throughout the school. The youngest pupils move energetically around the indoor and outdoor classrooms, demonstrating good co-ordination when cutting, sticking or making models. Pupils further develop their physical skills through PE lessons. For example, Year 1 pupils participate with focus and enthusiasm when performing Welsh country dancing routines and older pupils participate in a wide range of after-school sports clubs, including rugby and ballet.

Pupils develop their creative skills well across the school. For instance, Year 3 pupils create their own high-quality landscape paintings inspired by Welsh artist Elin Manon. Older pupils experiment imaginatively with watercolour paints, producing vibrant artwork as part of their science topic on water.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Many pupils feel safe at school and feel that it is free from bullying. Most pupils know who to turn to for support and feel that staff will listen to their concerns and help them when they need it. This is due to the positive, trustful and respectful working relationships pupils have with adults at the school. As a result, many pupils behave in a friendly and courteous manner, showing respect to their peers, staff and adults. They are very welcoming and courteous to visitors and keen to discuss their work and learning experiences. Pupils learn to manage their emotions successfully and

know that, when they experience moments of difficulty, they can access the school's nurture class for further support.

Many pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and talk enthusiastically about their work. They sustain concentration and successfully avoid distractions in class. Generally, they work well to ensure that they complete tasks, collaborate effectively and demonstrate consideration for the way others work, showing respect for their thoughts and ideas. They are confident to attempt tasks and keen to learn about and explore new experiences. The majority of pupils are beginning to persevere when they face difficulties with their learning. However, they are too willing to seek help from an adult without first trying alternative approaches.

Most pupils understand the importance consuming healthier food and drinks. They describe the benefits of taking part in regular exercise and enjoy developing their physical skills and fitness during the school day. Nearly all pupils understand the importance of staying safe when using digital devices. For example, older pupils understand the impact screen time can have on their well-being. Most older pupils talk confidently about their rights as children and understand that they should respect the rights of their peers. As they move through the school, pupils show an increasing awareness of the need to treat everyone with respect and celebrate their differences. Many pupils enjoy sharing information about their own cultures and beliefs with peers.

Pupils across the school take part in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities that provide them with opportunities that they might not ordinarily experience, for example, many pupils attend Ballet Club. Pupils are at an early stage in influencing the work of the school through their roles in the wide range of leadership groups, such as the attendance champions and Heddlu Bach.

## **Teaching and learning experiences**

Staff across the school share a vision for its curriculum and work together to ensure that this continues to evolve and to meet the needs and interests of pupils. Through their close working with colleagues at Eveswell on curriculum design, teachers are forming a clear plan for the progressive development of pupils' skills. As a result, teachers have a clear understanding of the expected progress pupils should make and use this to plan lessons with clear and high expectations. Teachers use a central theme to plan well thought out lessons that systematically develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. They provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to influence what they learn. For example, teachers use pupils' ideas and questions at the beginning of class topics to influence their planning. As a result, many pupils are interested in their learning and engage well in their topic work. However, teachers are at the early stages of ensuring that pupils' learning experiences are suitably authentic and meaningful.

There is a systematic and beneficial approach to the development of pupils' literacy skills. Teachers plan effective opportunities for pupils to develop their oracy, reading and writing skills. As a result, many pupils make sound progress in these areas and transfer these skills across the curriculum to a suitable standard. Similarly, provision for the development of pupils' numeracy skills builds appropriately in focused maths sessions. However, opportunities for pupils to apply these skills across the curriculum

are less well developed. Most teachers plan suitably for pupils to use their digital skills to support their learning, for example they access digital platforms to complete learning activities. However, teachers do not ensure that pupils develop the full range of digital skills. For example, older pupils struggle to save and retrieve their work and have a limited understanding of including more advanced features in their work, such as hyperlinks and animations.

Teachers plan effectively for pupils to consider Welsh culture and diversity, and to understand modern Welsh society. For example, they learn about the features of their locality. Opportunities for pupils to develop their oracy skills in Welsh in lessons and across the school are beneficial. In addition, staff plan and organise a range of trips and visits to support pupils' learning. These are successful in widening pupils' experiences. For instance, older pupils benefit from a visit to an outdoor activity residential centre. There are a suitable range of extra-curricular clubs, such as rugby and up-cycling, which enable pupils to make choices about further developing and enhancing their skills and experiences. The school provides a suitable emphasis on developing pupils' understanding of the importance of keeping fit and making healthy food choices. Nearly all teachers support pupils to understand the importance of keeping themselves safe when using online devices.

Staff across the school establish and develop positive working relationships with pupils. This creates a happy and safe space with well-being at the heart of the school's work. Consequently, Somerton Primary is a nurturing school where most staff and pupils feel valued by one another. Many teachers have high expectations for pupils' behaviour in lessons and manage low level disruption appropriately.

Overall, support staff know pupils well. They deliver worthwhile individual, group and in-class support, including specific work to address individual pupils' learning needs. Staff work hard to develop an attractive learning environment in a challenging building, although the use of indoor and outdoor spaces are not always effective in enhancing the curriculum. In the younger classes, the environment limits pupils' ability to develop their independence and curiosity.

Across the school teaching is not always consistent. In a few classes, teachers deliver lessons at a suitable pace and move the learning on appropriately. However, too often, beneficial opportunities for pupils to collaborate on authentic learning tasks are missed. Staff provide a range of well-considered resources to assist pupils with their learning, although opportunities for pupils to access these independently is limited. The majority of teachers have high expectations of pupils and generally plan activities that meet their needs appropriately using real-life contexts for learning. However, in too many lessons, adults over-direct learning and do not challenge pupils enough to develop their thinking or understanding.

Most teachers use questioning effectively to check pupil understanding and move the learning forward. They provide appropriate opportunities to review and discuss learning at different points during lessons. A few teachers use this approach well and this supports pupils to overcome any misconceptions. Arrangements for pupils to discuss and reflect on their work are at an early stage of development and most pupils are unclear on what they need to do to improve their learning. Overall, most teachers use assessment effectively to inform next steps in learning and help them identify pupils in need of additional support.

## Care, support and guidance

The school is a highly inclusive, caring community. A particular strength of the school is its effective care, support and guidance for pupils and their families. Staff know their pupils, families and the local community very well and place a high priority on pupils' well-being. The school's nurture provision class is beneficial in promoting pupils' well-being. This is a warm, welcoming and safe place that enables pupils to learn to manage their emotions more effectively. This enables vulnerable pupils to become more resilient when facing challenging circumstances.

A particular strength of the school is its identification and support for pupils who have responsibilities for looking after relatives at home. The school works successfully with external agencies and families to ensure that these pupils have opportunities to flourish. There is effective support for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) through school-based interventions and close working with specialist external agencies. As a result, pupils with EAL make good progress and work at appropriate levels for their age. Staff encourage pupils to consider other people's views sensitively, and to acknowledge and respect diversity and the importance of the school's values.

There is strong collaboration across the federation to meet the needs of pupils with ALN. The Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo) benefits from close working with the ALNCo at Eveswell Primary. Staff provide comprehensive classroom support for those in need and enable them to play a full part in school life. Skilled support staff carry out their roles with dedication and provide careful support for pupils. There are effective systems to track and monitor pupils' progress. Arrangements for identifying and responding to the needs of specific pupils are rigorous and timely. Staff monitor pupils' progress effectively and have worked well to implement Welsh Government's ALN reforms. Leaders work closely with a wide range of agencies to provide valuable specialist services to support pupils' emotional health and learning needs. Staff across both schools share their expertise effectively to widen teachers' skills in promoting inclusion for all pupils. The school's procedures for managing challenging behaviour are robust. The readiness of staff to listen to pupils' concerns contributes significantly to promoting the positive relationships that exist between staff and pupils.

The school provides pupils with opportunities to become members of various pupil voice committees. However, this is at an early stage of development, groups do not meet regularly and consequently these have limited impact on school life. Acts of daily collective worship boost pupils' spiritual and moral development well. Staff promote values such as respect, empathy and compassion well and provide pupils with valuable opportunities to reflect on their own beliefs and values, for example through their work on being a good friend.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and give no cause for concern. Staff at all levels understand their roles in keeping pupils safe. The school works closely with outside agencies to respond effectively to any concerns and provides support to pupils and their families where necessary. School leaders monitor attendance robustly and work closely with the families of children who are not attending school regularly. As a result, the rates of attendance show a continual upward trend for all pupils including pupils eligible for free school meals.

## **Leadership and management**

The executive headteacher of Eveswell and Somerton Primary Schools has a clear vision for the federation. She has high expectations and shares these with staff, pupils and parents at the schools. The executive headteacher is ably supported by deputy headteachers at each school, who manage their schools well on a daily basis. These leaders value the support they have from the executive headteacher and the confidence she has instilled in them to enable them to discharge their duties effectively. The executive headteacher is keen to develop the wider senior leadership team across the federation to support the progress the schools make, for example when developing the curriculum. Across the federation, all staff understand their roles and engage in professional learning to ensure that they deliver their duties effectively. They value the support they receive from the executive headteacher and senior leaders, particularly when trialling new ideas in their classrooms. Parents value the support the school provides for their children. Overall, they appreciate the timely communication from leaders and staff. They value the relationship they have with staff and appreciate how the school helps them to understand what their children will learn while at school.

Governors understand their roles and discharge their responsibilities suitably. They ensure that they fulfil their statutory obligations, such as managing complaints and contributing to the planning and delivery of the schools' strategic direction. They take a keen interest in the progress the school is making and, through first-hand evidence, they understand its strengths and areas for development. They are keen to support leaders and offer an appropriate balance of support and challenge when holding leaders to account. They have appropriate strategies and plans in place to promote healthy eating and drinking and to ensure that pupils make informed choices. Together, leaders develop a secure culture of safeguarding, based on policies and protocols that are known by all. They emphasise the importance of good attendance and ensure that there are robust procedures in place to support families where attendance is a cause for concern. Leaders manage the schools' budgets well. They prioritise spending appropriately and use the pupil development grant effectively to support pupils through the deployment of additional skilled staff. Leaders manage their resources well and prudently, given the challenges of the school building.

The school's monitoring and evaluating processes enable it to identify the areas in need of improvement. The school's monitoring and evaluating processes enable it to identify the areas in need of improvement. Leaders plan carefully for the development of the federation and consider the uniqueness of both the schools, identifying appropriate improvement priorities, identifying links and where support can be provided. These are fully costed, with suitable timescales for achievement and lead personnel identified. All staff are aware of this plan and understand their roles in achieving it. Across the schools, leaders work together to gather first hand evidence of the quality of its provision and the progress pupils make. Together they analyse these and identify ways forward, such as improving the use of incidental Welsh, and this has a positive impact upon provision. Leaders keep provision and pupil outcomes under constant review and adapt processes in order to ensure that they remain effective. For example, following analysis of pupil outcomes, staff made improvements to their understanding of the progression of skills in many aspects of the curriculum and the teaching of Welsh. In a few instances, leaders miss opportunities to further refine teaching, for example in developing opportunities for

pupils to challenge themselves and develop their independence in learning. Recently, leaders have managed significant challenges, including the turbulence of staff absence and the impact this has on aspects of provision, pupils' attitudes to learning and their overall outcomes.

Leaders are keen to promote a positive culture of continuous professional learning and staff embrace these opportunities. Leaders encourage innovation among staff, who appreciate the opportunities leaders provide for them to conduct research and to experiment with new ideas. Staff from Somerton have led initiatives across the federation on the development of nurture provision to support the well-being of pupils. To further build capacity and develop teaching across the federation, teachers work together in small groups to trial new approaches to teaching and learning that benefit pupils, for example through the emerging development of assessment for learning strategies with pupils.

## 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](http://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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