



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

A report on

**Gaer Primary School
Gaer Road
Newport
NP20 3GY**

Date of inspection: July 2018

by

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

About Gaer Primary School

Gaer Primary School is on the west side of the city of Newport. It opened in 2014 following the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools. The school has 459 pupils between the ages of 3 and 11, including 63 part-time pupils in the nursery. There are 17 classes, including a resource base class in key stage 2 for pupils with a range of speech, behavioural and general learning difficulties.

The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is around 20%. This is close to the national average of 19%. A few pupils are from a minority ethnic background. The school has identified 32% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, which is well above the national average of 21%, but this includes the pupils in the resource base class. A very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

The headteacher took up his post in September 2014. This is the school's first inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

Nearly all pupils make good, and often very good, progress as they move through the school, often from low starting-points on entry. The school is a happy and caring community where pupils have strong attitudes to learning and very good behaviour. Nearly all pupils show very good levels of concentration in their work and they are keen to progress in their learning. They work hard and complete learning tasks to a high standard.

The quality of teaching is excellent across the school and assessment for learning is a particularly strong feature. Pupils receive a broad, balanced and rich curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils very well. The school benefits from strong and effective leadership. There is a clear strategic direction for developing the school and there has been a very strong track record of improvement over recent years. Governors are extremely effective in their roles and embrace new initiatives and change purposefully.

| Inspection area | Judgement |
|--|------------------|
| Standards | Excellent |
| Wellbeing and attitudes to learning | Excellent |
| Teaching and learning experiences | Excellent |
| Care, support and guidance | Excellent |
| Leadership and management | Excellent |

Recommendations

R1 Continue to improve attendance

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to assessment for learning for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Excellent

The majority of pupils enter the school with language, numeracy and social skills that are below those expected for pupils of their age. However, nearly all pupils make good and often very good progress in the development of these skills by the end of Year 6. This includes pupils who attend the resource base class, those who receive English as an additional language and the very few in the care of the local authority

Nearly all pupils in the foundation phase make strong progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. For example, nearly all pupils in reception converse very well with other pupils and adults when discussing pirates. By the end of the foundation phase, most pupils express their ideas and opinions enthusiastically and respond to questions confidently. They have a wide range of vocabulary and think of difficult words to replace simple ones. By the end of key stage 2, nearly all pupils have excellent oracy skills. Nearly all pupils speak very confidently in a wide range of situations, expressing opinions and feelings with maturity.

Most pupils in the foundation phase enjoy reading and are developing their reading skills very well. By Year 2, many pupils read with confidence and fluency. Most read with increasing expression and show a good understanding of the content and context of a range of different books. Most pupils name favourite writers and describe personal preferences in books, giving precise reasons for their choice. Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 read with fluency and expression. They show a very positive attitude to reading and enjoy sharing and talking about books and authors. By Year 6, most skim and scan texts effectively and retrieve specific information accurately, for example when preparing and reading a dialogue from 'Oliver Twist'.

In the foundation phase, pupils' writing skills develop very well. Most pupils write at appropriate length for a good range of purposes with effective use of adjectives. By Year 2, many pupils produce extended pieces of detailed and informative writing, for example their factual writing about the tyrannosaurus rex. The high standard of many pupils' writing skills across the curriculum is a notable strength. In key stage 2, most pupils use a range of genres very confidently. They plan and improve their work thoroughly to produce extended pieces of writing of high quality, for example their writing about 'Children in 2018 working in Victorian conditions'. Most pupils make outstanding use of their broad literary experiences and have developed into accomplished, independent writers across all aspects of the curriculum.

Across the school, most pupils make good progress in Welsh. They respond positively to instructions and display a good understanding of the Welsh used by staff. Many are confident to talk in informal situations. All pupils use Welsh successfully in their work in other subjects. As they progress through the school, a majority of pupils develop a good understanding of simple Welsh texts and they answer basic questions about these with developing accuracy. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils' writing skills in Welsh are progressing well. Most pupils' knowledge and understanding of the culture and heritage of Wales is good.

Nearly all pupils make very good progress in developing their numeracy skills and apply their skills exceptionally well in real-life contexts. For example, in the foundation phase, most pupils handle money confidently when buying and selling items in the Pet Food Shop. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have a very good knowledge of basic number facts and use these well to tackle simple problems effectively. Most pupils in key stage 2 have very good numeracy skills, which they apply confidently when solving problems in mathematics lessons and in subjects across the curriculum. For example, they explain with clear understanding how they multiplied decimals to work out the code for Ronaldo's lost property box. They use their skills effectively in science experiments when measuring temperature or finding the average reaction time when exploring the best time of day for the English cricket team to train. Pupils in the special needs resource base make at least good progress and use their numeracy skills successfully in science and in topic work, for example when estimating the size of a ship in a story.

Throughout the school, nearly all pupils apply a wide range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills very effectively to support their work across the curriculum. In the nursery class, pupils select tools and colours independently and sensibly when using a drawing program to create imaginative images, such as 'a stingray with lights'. Most add text to their images and a very few can retrieve saved documents with very little support. By the end of the foundation phase, nearly all pupils use email effectively to communicate with their teacher and friends. For example, they email a palaeontologist to find out interesting facts about dinosaurs. Most pupils in key stage 2 use ICT successfully to present information in a variety of interesting ways through, for example, videos, web pages and presentation packages. Younger pupils in key stage 2 create a spreadsheet to help them with multiplication tables effectively. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils organise paragraphs, headings and pictures successfully when creating their own informative webpage about weather systems.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Across the school, nearly all pupils display exceptionally high levels of wellbeing. They enjoy school and show very positive attitudes to their learning. Working relationships between pupils and staff are warm and trusting, and this helps almost all pupils to feel safe and valued. A very strong feature of the school is the respect and courtesy that pupils show towards each other, adults and visitors.

Nearly all pupils' behaviour is very good. They settle in lessons quickly and move between tasks sensibly and efficiently. They behave calmly and responsibly in class and while moving around the school. Their willingness to work individually, in pairs and in groups is very good. They are proud of their work and this is reflected in the very high standard of presentation in their books.

Most pupils in key stage 2 show resourcefulness and resilience when completing challenging tasks. Nearly all pupils take part in planning their termly projects and this results in very high levels of interest and engagement in their work. Pupils greatly enjoy the opportunity to work alongside their parents regularly and this motivates pupils further. In the foundation phase, pupils show infectious enthusiasm for their 'Claws, Jaws and Dinosaurs' project.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. By the end of key stage 2, they describe how to stay safe online confidently. For example, they clearly understand and discuss the possible dangers of making new friends online.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of making healthy choices when choosing a snack and the contents of packed lunches. Pupils in the nursery enjoy trying new healthy foods, such as melon and passion fruit, and older pupils explain the need to eat a balance of different food groups to maintain a healthy diet. In key stage 2, they are aware of the importance of keeping fit and understand how exercise plays a key part in keeping healthy. They particularly enjoy opportunities to swim, play football and learn dance routines.

Nearly all pupils show very good levels of concentration in their work and they are keen to progress in their learning. They work hard and complete learning tasks to a high standard. They feel that the school values them highly as individuals. This improves their self-confidence and supports their progress as they move through the school. From a very early age, most pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve their work and, by the end of key stage 2, this is very secure.

Pupils embrace the many and varied opportunities to undertake leadership roles and this is a very strong feature. Ambassadors, Criw Cymraeg, the school council and digital leaders are among a wide range of leadership groups within the school. Members take their roles very seriously and produce plans which plot out their actions for the year very clearly. They represent and support other pupils maturely. For example, play leaders share presentations of their vision for improved playtimes in assemblies. They take responsibility for the new equipment purchased and support younger pupils to play purposeful games, such as limbo and group skipping. They proudly describe the way that their work has strengthened friendships across year groups and improved lunchtime behaviour.

Most pupils develop a worthwhile awareness of sustainability through the work of the eco-committee and healthy lunchtime monitors, and they actively encourage others to reduce the use of plastic at lunchtimes. Most pupils develop a beneficial understanding of equality and fairness through well-developed personal and social education programme and whole-school events, such as Green Day.

Over recent years, attendance has been low compared to that of similar schools. However, overall attendance improved last year and the rate of persistence absence has declined significantly.

Teaching and learning experiences: Excellent

The quality of teaching is excellent across the school. Teachers plan skilfully and make effective use of a variety of rich teaching methods and interesting learning experiences to engage nearly all pupils' interest successfully.

Teachers and learning support assistants work very effectively as a team and take advantage of every opportunity to enrich pupils' language. This contributes successfully towards most pupils expressing their ideas and opinions enthusiastically and effectively. Staff have very high expectations of each pupil, and the quality of

their presentations and their questioning of pupils is challenging and very purposeful. This ensures that nearly all pupils apply themselves fully to their tasks, concentrate for extended periods and show a high level of motivation. Staff have very effective working relationship with pupils and create an extremely supportive and stimulating learning environment in their classes. Staff in the resource base class have very secure knowledge and understanding of how best to support their pupils' varied learning needs.

Assessment for learning is a particular strength across the school. Staff use effective questioning consistently to challenge, to spark discussion and to check that pupils understand their work. Teachers provide pupils with highly effective oral and written feedback. They encourage pupils to respond purposefully to the constructive comments, which teachers have written and to evaluate their own work constructively, for example through effective use of the six 'thinking hats' process. Nearly all teachers make very effective use of individual pupil targets to review and plan their future learning. This ensures that nearly all pupils across the school are clear about what they need to do to improve their work. In the resource base class, staff use information from the assessment of pupils' work well to plan the next steps in their learning.

Staff provide a broad, balanced and rich curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils. They use interesting, imaginative themes and learning experiences very well to engage pupils' interest and to develop their skills and curiosity successfully. Pupils across the school offer suggestions and ideas about what they would like to study at the beginning of each theme. This motivates them to learn and strengthens their commitment to their work very well.

In the foundation phase, staff nurture pupils' independence and develop their skills effectively. There is a very good mix of adult-led and independent, child-led activities. As a result, provision in the outdoor and indoor areas is of high quality and enriches the curriculum effectively. Pupils in key stage 2 build well on this firm foundation and teachers encourage pupils to apply their skills in challenging tasks.

The successful way that the school uses the literacy and numeracy framework in planning is a particular strength across the school. As a result, pupils develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills effectively in all classes and use them in rich and purposeful contexts across the curriculum. The school takes good account of the principles of the new curriculum for Wales in key stage 2 and provides tasks and challenges for pupils that drive them to achieve high standards in their work. A notable example is the work by older pupils on the life of Gandhi and independence for India.

Provision for developing the Welsh language is of a high standard. Staff create an extremely positive Welsh ethos and promote the language effectively. This gains the interest and enthusiasm of nearly all pupils. Through cross-curricular work, visits and opportunities to compete in eisteddfodau, pupils receive interesting experiences to learn about their area and about Welsh history and culture.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school supports the needs of individual learners very well. Leaders and teachers analyse information on pupils' progress and use assessment information well to plan effective support in classes and through an extensive range of

intervention programmes. For example, a numeracy support programme has resulted in most pupils making very good progress. There are beneficial strategies to support those experiencing emotional and social difficulties. The 'Team Around the Gaer' has had a positive impact on supporting vulnerable pupils and their family. All pupils with additional learning needs have an individual development plan that includes measurable, challenging and achievable targets. As a result, nearly all targeted pupils make very good progress in line with their abilities and needs. Pupils in the resource base class benefit from a well-organised learning environment that provides very strong support for pupils. The school involves these pupils well in activities, such as assemblies and playtimes, and this integrates them effectively into the school community.

The school offers an innovative range of opportunities for parents to find out about the work their children are doing in school and how to support their child's learning. In the foundation phase, staff organise regular 'parent partnership' activities. This has led to many parents developing a better understanding of how to prepare their child for school and how to support their learning at home. In addition, 'Family Learning' provides excellent opportunities for parents to work alongside their children on a range of exciting projects, for example planning a wedding and a trip to the zoo. The school works closely with the educational welfare officer to implement a range of strategies to promote good attendance and punctuality.

There are appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking through assemblies and class activities. Healthy lunchbox monitors encourage pupils to have a healthy balance of food and they take responsibility for awarding 'healthy lunchbox' certificates. A good range of extra-curricular clubs, such as football, dance, drama, cricket and athletics, promotes pupils' fitness and wellbeing well. Older pupils in key stage 2 experience outdoor activities during a residential trip. The 'digital leaders' are working well to raise awareness of internet safety for pupils of all ages.

Pupil voice is highly developed throughout the school and staff provide many opportunities for pupils to play an active part in decision-making and to undertake leadership roles. There is a very active school council, eco committee and Criw Cymraeg. The school links effectively with community organisations and businesses, such as a local supermarket, the local church and a design company, for example to create a new school logo. Leaders and teachers offer good opportunities for pupils to engage in trips and visits to places, such as the Newport Wetlands and Techniquet.

The school is a very happy and caring community. There is a strong emphasis on the importance of good behaviour, respect and resilience, and this has a positive influence on pupils' strong attitudes to learning. Pupils have worthwhile experiences to develop their understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues during assemblies and classroom activities, which encourages them to respect other beliefs and religions. They have a good range of opportunities to perform at school and in their local community. The annual Eisteddfod and expressive arts week develop their confidence and self-esteem purposefully.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Excellent

The school benefits from strong and innovative leadership and there is a clear vision and strategic direction for developing the school. The headteacher sets appropriately high expectations for staff and pupils, which he communicates energetically. The headteacher distributes responsibilities very effectively at all levels and supports high levels of professional development among staff as leaders within and beyond the school. An excellent example of leadership is through the promotion and implementation of the digital competency framework and the development of an ICT toolkit for colleagues. The deputy headteacher provides excellent support to the headteacher and has a prominent role in taking forward key whole-school priorities.

The senior management team is strong, enthusiastic and effective. It supports staff in the achievement of teaching of high quality and the provision of stimulating learning experiences very successfully. Members of the team encourage and promote a positive, caring ethos of collaboration among staff and this is a particular strength of the school. During recent years, senior leaders have worked very successfully with teachers to improve all aspects of the life and work of the school, particularly in relation to the development professional skills through highly effective teamwork, for example in the development of assessment for learning and the expressive and creative arts projects. Learning support staff contribute very successfully to improving pupils' standards, wellbeing and social skills.

The school has robust performance management arrangements, and successful training opportunities support the process thoroughly. Nearly all members of staff benefit from taking part in a broad range of professional development activities that meet school priorities and personal aspirations effectively. The strong focus on professional learning reflects the high priority the school places on developing the skills of all staff. Staff observe each other teach through triad arrangements and give each other honest and open feedback. Management responsibilities link very effectively to the expertise and strengths of individual teachers.

The members of the governing body undertake their roles very conscientiously and look actively for ways to expand and develop their effectiveness. They embrace new initiatives and respond positively to change. They have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The dialogue between themselves and with the senior leadership of the school is very purposeful and productive. The governing body monitors the school's self-evaluation processes very effectively. They undertake regular learning walks with pupils to discuss areas of the curriculum, standards of work and the latest developments in learning, for example the digital competency framework. This ensures that they challenge the school successfully to improve standards and ensure provision of high quality.

The school has a strong culture of continuous self-evaluation, which focuses clearly on pupils' outcomes. The process is very successful in enabling leaders to identify, monitor and evaluate the school's performance successfully. This ensures that there is a positive climate of targeting and challenging pupils to reach their full potential and to make achievable improvements. Senior and middle leaders use an extensive range of information effectively to evaluate pupils' achievements and progress. The school's improvement plan focuses directly on the outcomes of self-evaluation and details the main priorities clearly. It has a clear, structured programme to monitor the implementation of priorities regularly. As a result, the school has had a very strong track record of improvement over the last four years.

The school is well resourced and leaders ensure effective use of the school's budget to improve provision. Leaders manage and monitor expenditure well and link it carefully to the priorities in the school development plan. Senior leaders are very successful in using substantial extra funding through a variety of projects and grants, which impact strongly on pupils' standards and creative development.

The school uses funding from the pupil development grant planning to provide a wide variety of support activities for all relevant pupils, for example by developing their literacy skills through forest school activities and expressive arts opportunities. This has had a very successful impact on all targeted pupils. There is a calm ethos in the school's indoor learning areas and pupils benefit from stimulating outdoor areas, which enrich pupils' learning experiences very well.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

| | |
|--|--|
| Excellent | Very strong, sustained performance and practice |
| Good | Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement |
| Adequate and needs improvement | Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement |
| Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement | Important weaknesses outweigh strengths |

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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