



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

A report on

**Willowbrook Primary School
Sandbrook Road
St Mellons
Cardiff
CF3 0ST**

Date of inspection: November 2019

by

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

About Willowbrook Primary School

Willowbrook Primary School is in the St Mellons area of Cardiff. There are 450 pupils at the school, including 54 who attend nursery on a part-time basis. The school has 15 single-age classes. The average of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last three years is around 27%. This is above the national average of 18%. The school identifies 14% of pupils as having special educational needs. This figure is below the national average of 21%. A very few pupils have statements of special educational needs. Around 19% of pupils have English as an additional language. No pupils come from Welsh speaking homes.

The school's last inspection was in November 2013. The headteacher took up the post in 2009 and is currently working for the regional consortium on secondment. The deputy headteacher is leading the school in his absence.

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 behave very well and feel safe and secure in school. They have positive attitudes and are keen to learn and participate fully in lessons and in school life. Most develop their social skills well and show respect and concern for each other and visitors. During their time at school, nearly all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, make good or better progress in their learning and wellbeing.

The school's curriculum engages and motivates pupils well. Teachers provide effective opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their skills. Pupils starting from below the expected levels in language make good progress in developing their literacy and speaking and listening skills. All staff work strongly as a team to deliver a standard of care for pupils that supports their wellbeing effectively.

The school's leadership team and governors have established a positive ethos, which they maintain effectively. They ensure that the school community is welcoming and that it promotes and celebrates its diversity strongly. Governors and staff work together well to make improvements and raise standards successfully.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Improve opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum and especially in ICT
- R2 Improve pupils' ability to assess and improve their own work
- R3 Ensure that all school improvement priorities are clearly focused and have specific intended outcomes

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

Nearly all pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Around a half of pupils make better than expected progress in English and mathematics. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards their individual targets. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress overall and develop their language skills well.

When they join the nursery, many pupils have limited speaking skills. They quickly develop their early communication skills using mainly single words and short phrases. As they move through foundation phase, they make good progress. They listen attentively to adults in small groups and in whole class sessions and respond appropriately to questions. Most Year 2 pupils speak clearly when working with others. For instance, when making rafts to float a gingerbread man, pairs of pupils explain how they will improve their next attempt after their first has sunk.

In key stage 2, most pupils use their speaking and listening skills well in class to support their learning, for instance when talking to partners or in small groups. Most readily develop new vocabulary. For example, most Year 6 pupils have a good understanding of terms used in newspaper writing, and correctly talk about by-lines, headlines and captions when analysing a page layout.

In the foundation phase, most pupils develop a useful understanding of letter blends and sounds and make good progress in reading simple instructions and questions. As they move through foundation phase, most pupils develop their reading skills well and learn to tackle unfamiliar words effectively. More able Year 2 pupils read fluently. They discuss characters and predict what might happen next in their books. Most pupils in key stage 2 use their reading skills effectively to tackle tasks. They read instructions from a screen or text effectively. Most Year 4 pupils read with clarity and talk about the different genres of books they like and indicate their preferences. Older pupils in key stage 2 read with good expression and most understand how to use reference or non-fiction texts appropriately.

Most pupils develop their early mark-making skills effectively. They progress to print with letters successfully and, by the end of the foundation phase, many begin to develop their handwriting skills appropriately and join their letters. In Year 2, most pupils write for a suitable range of purposes, such as writing instructions or retelling a story. Most can make a pictorial story plan using simple drawings or symbols and 'read' it back logically to an adult. Many use this strategy well to help improve and sequence their writing.

Most key stage 2 pupils make good progress in developing their writing skills. For example, most Year 6 pupils write good quality, extended adventure stories. Most pupils present work for different purposes using different layouts effectively, such as when describing science experiments. They write legibly and carefully in their language books and for the many displays of good quality work around the school. However, presentation for different purposes such as laying out work in maths books or when using diagrams and captions is untidy in too many instances.

Throughout the school, most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and using Welsh. In Year 2, many use simple phrases and basic vocabulary when talking about the weather. By Year 6, most pupils respond correctly to simple questions with more able pupils using more complex dialogue successfully. Many pupils in key stage 2 read well, pronouncing words accurately and confidently with increased understanding of the text. Many pupils strive to use their oral Welsh outside of designated Welsh lessons.

Throughout the school, most pupils develop their mathematical skills well. In the foundation phase, nearly all Year 1 pupils make good progress learning to count confidently. In Year 2, nearly all have a strong concept of comparing numbers that are greater or smaller and many can double two-digit numbers. They learn to apply their skills well, such as when weighing in grams. Nearly all use correct vocabulary when measuring in centimetres or metres. They use tape measures effectively to measure length. As they move through key stage 2, most pupils apply suitable calculation strategies using the four rules of number to solve problems. Most pupils develop good reasoning skills and can explain their answers. Most Year 6 pupils are able to find percentages of quantities and develop a good understanding of fractions. However, although pupils develop these mathematical skills well in key stage 2, their ability to use these skills in activities across the curriculum is underdeveloped.

Most pupils develop their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) well. In the foundation phase, they use drawing and painting programs to experiment with colour confidently. For example, they draw and colour characters from stories and add speech bubbles and insert words. As they move through the foundation phase, many readily access tablet computers to record their activities with photographs. Nearly all Year 2 pupils access the national Hwb system effectively and use an app to make graphs to show their favourite pets. Most pupils in key stage 2 develop an understanding of how to search for information using the school's computers. Nearly all pupils develop an appropriate knowledge of how to stay safe online. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils use word processing and media presentation packages confidently to re-draft, illustrate and present their online research or written work. However, pupils' understanding of spreadsheets and use of ICT to present data to show findings from projects or science experiments is underdeveloped.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils behave very well in their classes and when moving around the school. They are friendly and proud of their school and treat visitors with respect and maturity. Most are sensitive to the needs of others including younger pupils they encounter. For example, key stage 2 pupils serving as 'playground buddies' apply themselves with great care when they help organise play activities for younger pupils in the foundation phase playground. Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and are confident that adults will listen to their concerns and deal with any problems.

Most pupils have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthily and explain what makes a balanced meal. Many pupils talk knowledgeably about the risks that consuming too many sugary drinks pose to their teeth and their weight. The majority of pupils have healthy fruit snacks in school, but a few bring unhealthy food to school in lunch packs. Most pupils are aware of the importance of taking

exercise and physical activity and many engage in active play at break times. Pupils support extra-curricular sports activities well. They speak keenly about sports clubs such as netball and football and explain that boys and girls are free to participate in all options.

Pupils have a very positive attitude to the wide range of activities the school provides, including cultural as well as sporting activities. For example, over 30 key stage 2 pupils took part in a Shakespeare Festival during the inspection period. They represented their school and performed alongside other schools. They demonstrate great pleasure in participating and speak with enthusiasm about the rehearsals and their friends' contributions as well as their own.

The positive attitude nearly all pupils have for school activities and towards learning is a strength. In the foundation phase, most remain on task and many develop their independence well and make choices as they move from one activity to another. In lessons, nearly all pupils are attentive to their teachers and are eager to do well. In key stage 2, most pupils work effectively together. They listen to each other and apply themselves constructively when required to work collaboratively.

Most pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of not missing school and the school's levels of attendance are good.

Pupils throughout the school take on roles of responsibility purposefully. Pupils in 'Criw Cymraeg' actively support Welsh language use in school. Many pupils talk with enthusiasm about the different 'Barn y Plant' groups, the 'Pupil Voice' participation teams, in which many of them engage. For example, they explain how these groups raised funds for a local care home.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The school provides a varied and balanced curriculum that is successful in meeting the needs of its pupils. Teachers plan and deliver a series of differing types of lessons that maintain most pupils' interest well. They regularly reflect on the quality and content of the curriculum and take good account of developments towards the new curriculum for Wales.

Teachers have recently reviewed the curriculum effectively to ensure a good focus on many important areas of skills. All teachers plan well for the development of literacy and speaking and listening skills across the curriculum. They ensure that pupils build on previous learning successfully to develop and use these skills. They make progress in their use of ICT to research and write. However, provision for pupils to apply their numeracy skills practically and use data in different subjects is limited. Pupils' understanding and use of electronic spreadsheets as they move through the school is underdeveloped.

A strength of the school's provision is the way in which it promotes pupils' creative skills. Pupils throughout the school are encouraged to participate in art and performance activities. For example, in key stage 2, whole classes of pupils learn to play the ukulele together.

Provision for developing the Welsh language and understanding the culture of Wales is successful. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to visit important sites and attractions linked to the culture and history of Wales. For example, when studying the Tudors and Stuarts, pupils visit Llancaiach Fawr. The school's staff and the Criw Cymraeg are good Welsh language role models. They promote the Welsh language effectively throughout the school.

Teachers and support staff develop strong, positive working relationships with pupils. Nearly all staff manage pupils' behaviour well in lessons. The pace of lessons in key stage 2 is brisk and teachers use a good range of questioning techniques. Teachers match levels of challenge to most pupils' needs and deliver a good balance of group, whole class and individual teaching.

Teachers in the foundation phase have a strong understanding of how young children learn best and they make good use of the outdoor environment to develop pupils' skills. For example, in the nursery class, staff develop pupils' speaking and listening skilfully in an activity where they have to locate where the 'evil pea' is hiding in the nursery garden. There is a stimulating variety of activities with a good balance between teacher-led and independent learning throughout the foundation phase classes.

In the foundation phase, teachers involve pupils in making decisions about their own learning effectively. This successfully develops their independence. However, in key stage 2, teaching is in some instances too adult directed, which limits pupils' progress as independent learners.

A team of support staff provides very effective learning and pastoral support for pupils. The team is a strength of the school, contributing enthusiastically to the learning experiences of pupils in whole class lessons and in smaller groups. It meets the needs of groups and individual pupils successfully, particularly those with special educational needs.

Staff have a sound understanding of pupils' existing knowledge and skills. Teachers set clear learning intentions for lessons. This helps pupils to understand what is expected of them and of how to be successful in their work. Teachers provide regular and useful feedback for pupils. They allocate time for pupils to assess their own work and the work of others. However, approaches to involve pupils in self and peer assessment are too varied and confusing. They do not ensure that pupils identify what they have done well and what they need to improve upon.

Teachers organise resources and teaching areas well and make effective use of the available space. The school arranges many opportunities, including residential stays, for pupils to visit places that support the curriculum. It provides a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities that are well supported and enrich pupils' learning and wellbeing successfully.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is welcoming and has a strong inclusive ethos. This provides a nurturing and successful learning environment for the diverse school community.

Senior leaders track the progress of all pupils well using a wide range of performance information. Teachers identify pupils requiring extra support and leaders promptly put in place arrangements matched to the specific needs of each pupil. The school provides a good range of intervention programmes to support pupils' learning, behaviour and wellbeing. These programmes are effective and have a beneficial impact on the progress of nearly all pupils who receive them. For example, a structured reading programme enables pupils working just below average levels to make rapid progress.

Trained support staff deliver many interventions skilfully. These support the work of the school's pupils with special educational needs well. The school has beneficial links with external agencies and specialist services. For example, a specialist teacher provides support for pupils with English as an additional language. This enables them to make good progress in language and supports their wellbeing successfully.

The school has effective arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking. The school encourages the benefits of regular physical activity, including outdoor exercise, successfully through regular physical education lessons and in after-school clubs. The school's personal and social education programme pays good attention to the development of pupils' individual emotional development. For example, discussion groups in lessons enable children to think about and discuss times they might not feel confident and help them find ways to overcome this.

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

The school uses a wide variety of methods to communicate and work in partnership with parents. For example, the nursery teacher and a member of her support staff visit each child at home before they start to attend nursery. These visits are highly valued by parents and help staff to establish trusting relationships with parents and children effectively. This contributes well to the way in which children settle in to school quickly. The school informs all parents about their child's progress through scheduled meetings and provides appropriate opportunities for parents to raise any concerns. Annual pupils' reports are suitably informative but they do not always convey clearly enough what a pupil's next steps should be.

Foundation phase pupils have regular times set to discuss with their teachers their ideas for ongoing class activities and to express their views. Through the school's 'Barn y Plant' action teams, many learn how to represent the views of others and to work co-operatively. The school positively fosters values of kindness, honesty and equality. For example, a whole school assembly uses national 'anti-bullying week' to provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on and discuss how they can be kind to each other. The school's religious education programme and school displays give pupils valuable opportunities to learn about world religions such as Judaism or religious practices such as Ramadan. The school's own diverse community, which is explicitly celebrated, helps pupils appreciate the experiences and languages of children from other countries. The school's well-established link with a school in Bordeaux develops pupils' understanding of the wider world successfully.

Leadership and management: Good

The acting headteacher provides effective leadership and management to the school. School leaders and staff have established a vision, which places pupils and their wellbeing at the heart of the school's work. The roles of senior leaders are clear and the staff in these positions are effective in supporting the school to achieve its aims. Regular staff meetings consider important issues, such as pupil performance. Leaders track the progress of all pupils rigorously and work well with staff to ensure that pupils make good progress.

The school addresses national priorities successfully. For example, leaders have kept a clear focus on maintaining good attendance. They have raised standards of literacy, both in English and Welsh. They have been effective in ensuring that pupils from more challenging backgrounds are not disadvantaged and achieve good outcomes.

The governing body is fully committed to meeting its responsibilities. Governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They offer an appropriate level of challenge. For example, the governing body challenged the school to enhance its focus on Welsh, which has shown good improvement since. It acts as a critical friend to the school's leadership team and contributes appropriately to the self-evaluation process.

There are appropriate systems to identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders use a suitable range of sources to collect evidence for self-evaluation, including the purposeful analysis of data, lesson monitoring and book scrutiny. Leaders use the information from these processes to highlight areas of underperformance and to identify relevant school priorities that staff and governors understand. Many improvement targets are clear, realistic and challenging and include success criteria with specific time scales. However, a major priority identified to improve the provision for all pupils is too general to identify helpfully the specific areas of practice to be changed.

The school has sufficient numbers of teachers and learning assistants to respond to the requirements of the curriculum and the school uses their expertise well. Leaders develop training for all staff and manage resources successfully to support pupils and deliver improvements. For example, a 'triad' system enables staff, in teams of three, to share their knowledge and understanding effectively. Staff work together well to meet pupils' needs. For example, they plan carefully to improve on vulnerable pupils' experiences outside of school by providing additional residential experiences.

The school uses effective methods to manage staff performance to meet whole-school requirements. This approach focuses on pupils' standards and meets the professional development requirements of staff well. The school collaborates beneficially with other schools locally. For example, teachers share good practice in monitoring standards in Welsh and in developing 'pupil voice'.

The school uses its resources well. It is a safe environment with spacious well-presented communal areas. Pupils have worked with a Welsh artist to improve on the reception area by producing a mural celebrating the school's surroundings.

The indoor environment is stimulating for learning. Pupils have access to plenty of good quality resources including books and ICT equipment. They have direct access

to well-resourced outdoor learning spaces. Governors and leaders monitor spending regularly to ensure that the school uses finances effectively to raise standards. They allocate the budget appropriately to address school priorities for improvement. The school uses the pupil development grant appropriately to provide additional support and resources for disadvantaged pupils. This work has resulted in improvements, for example to pupils' attendance and to their literacy and numeracy skills.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent 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 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' wellbeing, 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)

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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