



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

**A report on**

**Adamsdown Primary School**

**System Street  
Adamsdown  
Cardiff  
CF24 0JF**

**Date of inspection: May 2023**

**by**

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

## About Adamsdown Primary School

Name of provider	Adamsdown Primary School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	426
Pupils of statutory school age	333
Number in nursery classes	70
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%)	69%
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%)	9%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	72%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/05/2016
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/03/2015
Start date of inspection	02/05/2023
*	

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](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

Staff at Adamsdown Primary School create a warm and welcoming place where its diverse school community thrive. Pupils are ambitious, respectful and very happy. They settle into school quickly, love learning and benefit greatly from the school's highly effective approach to language acquisition.

With a significant proportion of pupils coming from countries affected by conflict, the school's School of Sanctuary status is firmly at the heart of its work. Teachers, leaders, support staff and governors are committed to providing the support each pupil needs to access the curriculum, beginning with well-being and emotional support. The strong partnership with parents and nurturing ethos of the school ensure that all pupils feel safe and develop a strong sense of belonging. The school's effective partnerships with its community also contribute to its success in supporting pupils' well-being and providing an engaging curriculum.

Throughout the school, pupils make very good progress in most aspects of their learning. They are highly involved in choosing what and how they learn and, by the end of their time at the school, they develop a sophisticated understanding of their progress, and can explain clearly what, how and why they learn the concepts they cover. They relate their learning to the paths they will follow in future, building on the authentic learning opportunities teachers plan and the wide range of valuable experiences they encounter.

The thoughtful approach to meeting pupils' individual needs improves their life chances and raises their aspiration. The school's work on human rights and relationships provides pupils with a comprehensive understanding of equity, justice and empathy. Pupils develop their knowledge of their locality and the heritage and culture of Wales well, but opportunities for them to use the Welsh language regularly to improve their skills are limited.

Leaders support all staff to continuously develop their professional knowledge to improve their practice. This is a strength of the school and, as a result, staff make valuable contributions to the continuous improvement and effective evaluation of the school's work. Although they share their work with partner schools, leaders do not yet share their approach to curriculum development more widely to support other schools with this important reform.

## Recommendations

R1 Improve standards in Welsh

R2 Share the school's effective practice more widely

## 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 case studies on its work in relation to its approach to distributed leadership and its impact on self-evaluation, and on designing a curriculum to meet the needs of its learners, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

## Main evaluation

### Learning

Most pupils enter the school with skills significantly below those expected for their age. During their time in the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs and those for whom English is a second language, make very good progress in their learning from their differing starting points.

Nearly all pupils interact confidently with adults and other children and talk enthusiastically about their school and their learning. Younger pupils listen attentively to stories and ask and answer questions confidently. In Years 1 and 2, pupils follow teacher directions effectively, for example during PE to freeze and make shapes. Most older pupils speak articulately, with confidence and with an increasingly adventurous choice of vocabulary.

Most pupils' reading skills develop well. Many younger pupils recall stories they read, retelling events and describing characters. By Year 2, many pupils attempt to read unfamiliar words using a useful variety of strategies confidently. They discuss the books they read and explain why they enjoy them. Older pupils read a wide variety of texts purposefully and use their literacy skills well to support their learning.

Across the school, most pupils make good progress in developing their writing skills. They apply these successfully across the curriculum. The youngest pupils develop their fine motor skills appropriately and start to form letters correctly. Pupils in the reception class use their knowledge of sounds effectively to write instructions for making Welsh cakes. Most older pupils write purposefully. They develop a sound understanding of the elements of grammar that improve the quality of their written work, such as using synonyms to add interest. They plan and create a range of written work including stories, recounts, and reports. By the time they leave the school many of the more able pupils often write effectively at length. However, pupils' drafting and editing skills are underdeveloped.

A majority of pupils develop a useful understanding of basic Welsh words and phrases. The youngest pupils identify colours and begin to learn the vocabulary needed to describe what they are wearing. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 begin to describe how they feel, and the oldest pupils are beginning to use simple phrases to describe a visit in the past tense. However, across the school, pupils lack confidence

in answering even simple questions in Welsh and their Welsh language skills are generally underdeveloped.

Most pupils make good progress in understanding and developing their mathematical skills. The youngest pupils engage enthusiastically in practical activities that support the development of key vocabulary and number skills. By the end of Year 2, most have a secure understanding of appropriate number facts and handle money correctly. Older pupils sustain progress well, carrying out a range of calculations confidently. They demonstrate a good understanding of decimals, fractions and percentages. Across the school, most pupils apply their skills effectively in other aspects of their learning. For example, they apply their understanding of measure and multiplication when calculating the carbon footprint of foods imported to Wales.

Most pupils develop a good range of digital skills well. Younger pupils use an animation tool to produce 'Evil Pete the Disturbing Radish', during their 'superheroes' topic. In Years 3 and 4, pupils create multimedia presentations confidently. They use a music programme to generate a jingle, and a coding programme to construct an animated introduction. By the end of their time at the school, most pupils use their digital skills effectively for research and to enhance their learning across other aspects of their work.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their physical skills. They quickly develop co-operation and co-ordination during sports activities and enjoy challenging themselves with an interesting range of activities including balancing on tightropes, juggling and controlling hoops.

Across the school, most pupils develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills well. They use a range of strategies to accomplish challenges successfully. Younger pupils often set themselves challenges independently, using their knowledge of capacity, for example to explore the link between non-standard and standard units of measurement. Older pupils provide reasoned explanations for the physics behind magnets repelling during science investigations. They generate ideas and clearly identify their findings when discussing their previous discoveries.

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

Staff create warm and purposeful working relationships with pupils. As a result, all pupils feel safe. This is a strength of the school. They readily use the school's 'Helping Hands' system to identify the staff they know they can turn to when they need support. In addition, staff ensure that pupils have access to a range of appropriate support programmes that help them deal with their feelings and emotions well. The school's 'Nurture Nest' is a safe space where pupils check in for the advice and support they need. The school's work on human rights ensures that most pupils develop a secure understanding of the school's values and their own rights as a child.

Pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school is exceptional. They create and follow class charters to ensure that everyone can learn without disruption. Pupils who are new to the community, including those who have experienced trauma and those seeking asylum, settle well to school life and soon thrive.

Across the school, most pupils have extremely positive attitudes to learning and are often highly engaged. Younger pupils engage enthusiastically when exploring their learning with staff and when working independently. They enjoy using their imagination during play and are keen to find things out for themselves. They particularly enjoy learning outdoors and finding new ways to practise and embed their skills. Pupils are happy and confident learners who readily talk about how they are learning to be resilient. Most pupils develop appropriate aspirations for future careers, such as when older pupils talk about their desire to become a dentist or crime scene investigator.

Older pupils reflect on their learning, asking and answering questions that probe knowledge further. They focus well when working independently and collaborate effectively during paired and group work, sharing ideas and clarifying their understanding. Pupils contribute to their learning purposefully and suggest ideas for future learning, especially during their inception weeks at the beginning of units of work.

Most pupils respond well to verbal feedback from teachers, other adults and, on occasion, from their peers. From a young age, pupils begin to take ownership of their learning. Younger pupils confidently model their work and older pupils share their knowledge with their peers and clearly articulate their next steps in learning. As they move through the school, they use success criteria and teachers' feedback to identify and understand what they need to do to improve. Many choose suitable activities to extend their learning from a range of tasks. By the end of their time in school, pupils often develop a sophisticated approach to assessing their own learning and begin to assess the work of others.

Pupils are proud of their work and are keen to share what they have learned and what they have enjoyed, recalling their learning confidently. For example, they describe in detail their knowledge of forces and the process of learning about, researching, planning and articulating their views when writing about sustainable fashion.

Pupils, including those with additional learning needs and those new to English, take on leadership roles from Year 1 to Year 6. The School Council plans events, and the Eco-committee ensures that the school is a litter free zone. However, opportunities for these groups to impact on the wider life of the school are less well-developed.

## **Teaching and learning experiences**

The school's curriculum, focused firmly on the four purposes, is a strength. Developed over several years, it embodies the school's aim for all pupils to learn through a range of meaningful experiences enabling them to apply the skills needed for a successful future. This engaging and evolving curriculum fully involves pupils, including those with limited English, in creating and evaluating their learning experiences.

Teachers understand the individual nature of the school, and pupils often-complex needs well. They design learning that thoughtfully and sensitively meets the needs of all pupils and enables them to make strong links in their learning through an interesting range of authentic and relevant experiences. Learning about Cardiff

through the ages, for example, allowed pupils to better understand the places where they live and go to school, and their work on sustainability enables them to consider the effects of human actions, such as the purchase of 'fast fashion', on people and the environment. Older pupils benefit from opportunities to discover issues that affect them personally, relating these experiences to their work on human rights. Pupils explore the impact of equity, fairness, and justice. For example, through stories about the lives of influential people such as Katherine Johnson, they consider how people's circumstances, including the colour of their skin, their race and culture, affect the way they are treated and the way it makes them feel.

The school's work to develop pupils' English language is exemplary. From a young age, the focus on communication skills ensures that pupils make rapid progress. They soon develop confidence in speaking to a range of audiences and express their thoughts and ideas clearly. They develop an impressive range of vocabulary and by the time they leave the school most are highly articulate communicators.

Pupils benefit greatly from the many opportunities to work with organisations who raise their aspirations and enable them to consider the skills they have and the skills they will need to achieve their ambitions. The school ensures that pupils engage creatively with the arts. Most teachers plan plentiful and varied opportunities for pupils to express themselves through art. They often build on the skills they learn to experiment and to refine their work using a wide range of techniques and media. Generally, opportunities for pupils to develop music skills are limited.

The school enables pupils to develop their awareness of the history and culture of Wales. They make good use of visits to develop their knowledge of their locality. They learn about the landscape and compare traditional tales of Wales to those of other countries across the globe. In most classes, teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to learn Welsh. However, pupils do not practise their Welsh language regularly throughout the school day. As a result, their ability to use Welsh at an appropriate level is limited.

Many teachers employ a good range of purposeful teaching approaches. They regularly review and refine the impact of their teaching, identifying effective ways to support and challenge pupils. They build well on prior learning and use questioning effectively to develop pupils' thinking and check for understanding. A team of dedicated teaching assistants support learning well, enabling pupils to recall previous learning and suggesting useful ways forward.

Across the school, teachers have developed a shared understanding of progression. They plan sequences of lessons that enable pupils to build on prior learning in many areas of the curriculum, for example to improve their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. The school's recent focus on improving Maths skills supports pupils to develop a greater depth of understanding of concepts. They transfer these skills readily to other aspects of their learning. Across the school, most teachers provide timely feedback during lessons to enable pupils to improve their work, setting realistic next steps for progress. As they move through the school, pupils learn to discuss and reflect on their work, recognising where they have been successful and identifying their own next steps through the effective use of success criteria.

The school's plans for developing pupils' understanding of relationships and diversity are well-embedded. Pupils develop a sophisticated understanding of others' feelings, for example when learning about the story of Prince Llewellyn they describe his regret and sorrow at the loss of his dog. Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to share their own experiences and cultures, for example celebrating special religious festivals, visiting places of worship and sharing food. They develop pupils' awareness of safe relationships and deal appropriately with important issues such as racism and gender.

### **Care, support and guidance**

All staff at Adamsdown Primary School are committed to creating and maintaining an inclusive community where pupil welfare is a priority. The school's strong nurturing ethos and the close relationships staff establish with parents and carers ensure that families receive the bespoke support they need. This thoughtful support often contributes effectively to raising pupils' self-esteem and confidence. The school's approach is particularly beneficial to pupils and their families who arrive at the school from other countries, supporting them to settle well into school life.

The provision for pupils with ALN meets statutory requirements. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) ensures that everyone works together to identify and monitor the progress that pupils with ALN make. This enables staff to adjust planning, teaching and intervention appropriately to meet pupil needs. The school successfully uses a person-centred approach and works effectively with families and other agencies, ensuring that pupil voice is at the heart of all they do. Teaching assistants deliver literacy, numeracy and social and personal programmes in each class that supports pupils' well-being and learning well.

The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop a good understanding of their local area and the culture and heritage of Wales, often relating this knowledge to their work on the wider world. For example, a study of Mari Lwyd and the traditions associated with the story led to a project on global New Year traditions. The school ensures that pupils have beneficial opportunities to develop their understanding of the world of work. The recent work with a local film company developed their understanding of the role of scriptwriter and prop maker, and enabled them to reflect on their own ambitions for the future.

Pupils make good use of the wide range of interesting extra-curricular opportunities available to them, most of which have been instigated by the pupils themselves. These clubs and activities often link well with real life experiences. Pupils enjoy knitting blankets for a cat rescue centre in the 'Knitting for Kitties' club and making healthy snacks in the cookery club.

The school promotes values well through its ethos and its curriculum. Pupils develop a strong sense of moral purpose and learn to practice empathy, kindness and respect. They demonstrate these values when willingly supporting others who are new to the school, helping them to settle in quickly.

The school provides highly effective support for families and the local community. The family engagement officer builds positive relationships with parents and provides beneficial training and support. For example, she works closely with outside



organisations to provide a useful workshop for families to learn how to cook on a budget.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders and teachers monitor pupils' attendance closely and work with parents to reduce persistent absenteeism. They work effectively with external agencies to reduce risks, and the outstanding work of the school as a School of Sanctuary ensures that pupils feel safe and cared for.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher provides exemplary leadership and acts as a strong role model for the whole school community. She promotes a clear vision of an inclusive school community where pupils 'aim high, are kind and show respect' to all. Well-being is a high priority across the school and, as a result, all pupils and staff are happy and confident, and enjoy their work.

Leadership is distributed effectively across the school. The headteacher is well supported by a deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and a team of middle leaders who work with staff and governors successfully to drive school improvement and to ensure that provision continuously improves.

School monitoring and self-evaluation procedures are robust and a strength of the school. Leaders carry out a range of worthwhile activities that help to provide a clear picture of the quality of teaching and learning. The school's work involving the whole learning community to evaluate and plan future improvement is noteworthy. This successfully involves governors, pupils and parents as well as the team of staff at the school. As a result, the school has made significant improvements in many areas of its work, which have been sustained over time.

The headteacher, governors and other senior leaders have high expectations of all staff. They use performance management systems effectively to bring about individual staff development and to promote whole-school improvement. For example, all staff are currently working on refining approaches to assessment across the school.

The governing body demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting the work of the school. Governors are well informed about the school's work by senior leaders and through their own monitoring activities across the school. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors support the headteacher and senior leaders well to promote a positive culture of safeguarding. They work with leaders to ensure that suitable policies are in place to promote the importance of healthy eating and drinking among pupils. The headteacher works effectively with governors to manage the school's finances and they have successfully reduced a deficit budget over the last year.

Leaders promote a highly effective learning culture where professional learning is valued. Staff benefit from dedicated professional learning time where they are encouraged to research and develop skills linked to school improvement priorities. The school provides staff with worthwhile opportunities to share practice, such as the

whole-school approach to guided reading. This supports teachers who are new to the school or who are at the start of their career successfully.

The school supports the development of leadership at all levels effectively. Staff attend a range of professional learning opportunities including national leadership training. They work well with cluster schools and external partners, for example to further develop the relationships aspect of the curriculum. Whilst the school shares its practice with schools on a local level, it does not currently share its strong practice more widely.

Leaders promote a strong sense of community where everyone feels valued. They collaborate effectively with a range of partners including local businesses. This helps to inform the decisions leaders take to adapt the school's provision for its pupils. For example, leaders have worked in partnership with the community to become a School of Sanctuary. As a result, the school's provision for pupils who are refugees or seeking asylum status is highly effective.

The school's work to address and minimise the impact of poverty on pupil attainment and achievement is implemented successfully. Leaders make good use of the pupil development grant, for example, to support the employment of a family engagement officer and to improve the well-being and skills of pupils across the school. The headteacher works with the governing body and all staff to ensure that costs arising from school do not act as a barrier to learning.

## 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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Publication date: 06/07/2023