Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

# A report on

# Idris Davies School

# Mill Field
# Abertysswg
# Rhymney
# NP22 5XF

# Date of inspection:  May 2023

# by

# Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

# and Training in Wales

## About Idris Davies School

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of provider | Idris Davies School |
| Local authority | Caerphilly County Borough Council |
| Language of the provider | English |
| Type of school | All Age |
| Religious character | |
| Number of pupils on roll | 897 |
| Pupils of statutory school age | 789 |
| Number in nursery classes | 36 |
| Number in sixth form | 42 |
| 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 All age schools is 21.6%) | 34.1% |
| Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in All age schools is 12.7%) | 8.9% |
| Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home | 0% |
| Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language | 3.2% |
| Date of headteacher appointment | 01/01/2018 |
| Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable) | |
| Start date of inspection | 22/05/2023 |

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

    a.   The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

## Overview

Idris Davies School is a highly inclusive, supportive and caring learning environment where staff know their pupils well. Leaders and staff make a considerable effort to ensure that pupils make progress in their learning and in their personal development during their time at school. This is reflected in the school's vision of giving 'every pupil - every opportunity - every day'.

When they start school in nursery or reception class, many pupils' language and social skills are below the expected levels. Most make good progress from their starting points, particularly in reading, numeracy, personal and social skills. A notable strength is the development of pupils' digital skills and creativity over time.

Leaders are relentless in making sure that the curriculum is accessible to all pupils, placing a particularly strong focus on mitigating the effects of poverty on pupil attainment and progress. As such, the school's curriculum meets the needs of nearly all pupils well and prepares them suitably for the next stage in their learning or for work. Many teachers have suitable expectations of pupils' behaviour and engagement in learning. They plan appropriate activities to ensure pupils make progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills. However, there is variation in how well teachers plan for the progressive development of pupils' literacy, in particular writing and advanced reading skills. In a minority of cases, teachers do not monitor pupils' progress in sessions close enough and a few teachers do not provide helpful enough written comments on pupils' work to enable them to understand what and how they can improve.

The support and care for vulnerable pupils, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, is exemplary. Leaders discuss and plan beneficial interventions and activities to help pupils access learning and to thrive in school. Despite their efforts, whole-school attendance remains low since the time of the pandemic and is a concern. There is a strong culture of raising aspirations, promoting ambition and success for all. Leaders work tirelessly to provide further beneficial learning experiences for pupils in collaboration with local employers and businesses.

The headteacher is an enthusiastic and positive-minded leader who places significant importance on raising the attainment and aspirations of all pupils. He shares his vision of providing every pupil with the best opportunities to thrive both academically and socially with parents, pupils and staff successfully. Senior leaders have developed a strong and effective culture of professional learning and this is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and developing leadership at all levels.

## Recommendations

R1  Improve attendance and reduce the levels of persistent absenteeism

R2  Strengthen the planning for the progressive development of pupils' literacy, in particular writing and advanced reading skills

R3  Address the specific areas for improvements in teaching and assessment
identified in the report

R4  Ensure sufficient time for personal and social education in key stage 4

## What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection. Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to its work on reducing the impact of poverty on pupils' attainment and raising their aspirations and that of their families, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

## Main evaluation

### Learning

When they start at the school, in nursery or reception class, many pupils' speech and language skills are at lower level than expected for their age. As they move through the school, many pupils make at least suitable progress, and a few make particularly strong progress in developing their knowledge and understanding and in their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Generally, many pupils make considerable progress over time in their personal and social skills from their starting points. They learn the importance of friendships, collaboration with staff, and respect for others, including visitors. A notable strength is that most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and those with weaker literacy and numeracy skills make strong progress from their starting points.

Many pupils make at least appropriate progress in their subject knowledge and understanding. A few pupils demonstrate secure prior learning and have strong recall. They use subject specific vocabulary and concepts well and they make productive use of their knowledge and understanding which enables them to make good progress. A few, however, do not make as much progress as they could. This is either due to shortcomings in aspects of teaching such as planning for the progressive development of pupils' subject knowledge and skills or because of pupils' poor engagement with learning.

The majority of pupils speak coherently and reasonably confidently in a broad range of contexts. They listen well to teachers' instruction and questioning. They generally wait their turn to speak and listen attentively when their peers share their ideas. The majority of pupils make strong progress in speaking and listening from an early age and, by the end of Year 6, many pupils demonstrate secure oracy skills. They respond thoughtfully to questioning and respond enthusiastically, often using a suitable range of subject specific vocabulary. For example, pupils in Year 2 describe their emotions and reactions to a 'do not open' label on Pandora's box. When given the opportunity, a few pupils higher up the school demonstrate strong oracy skills. They give extended verbal responses and well-reasoned and comprehensive explanations. However, a minority of pupils tend to lack confidence to propose

answers in class and offer brief, undeveloped verbal responses. In a few cases, older pupils do not listen well enough.

Across the school, many pupils read with appropriate fluency and understanding considering their stage of development. Many nursery pupils are developing beneficial reading skills and an early understanding of phonics. Reception pupils recognise and repeat initial sounds with confidence and use them to read simple three-letter words. A majority use their understanding of letter blends to read longer words although a few younger pupils struggle to read instructions for tasks and have difficulty in spelling out unfamiliar words. Overall, many pupils develop secure reading skills well as they move through the years, generally reading with fluency and accuracy appropriate for their age. This enables them to gather facts and information successfully from an appropriate range of texts. Many read aloud accurately and with expression. They recall main events in texts, and recognise when authors use devices to add emphasis, such as writing in capital letters or using exclamation marks. Higher up the school, many successfully read suitable texts for comprehension in a range of subjects and, where there are opportunities, many read aloud with confidence with accurate pronunciation and meaning. In English sessions, many read extracts from literary texts competently, annotate skilfully, drawing out key features and recalling key points relating to location, character, and main events from the text. In French sessions, the majority of pupils have sound knowledge of French vocabulary and grammar rules and use this effectively to translate sentences into English or to select correct nouns and verbs accurately in extended texts. Due to the nature of reading tasks and the lack of opportunities for extended reading in a minority of subject areas across the school, pupils do not develop their reading skills, especially advanced reading skills well enough.

Overall, many pupils make appropriate progress in their writing skills. They write suitably for an appropriate range of purposes, such as letters and stories. They develop a sound understanding of the features of descriptive and persuasive writing. Lower down the school, many pupils structure stories well using story boards and then begin to write coherent paragraphs to present information as they move through the years, using richer vocabulary linked to the theme. They develop in confidence, using an increasing range of adjectives to make writing more interesting. For example, Year 4 pupils use a broad range of descriptive language for effect when describing a character from 'Fantastic Mr Fox'. A few develop secure and sophisticated writing skills when they produce newspaper reports, autobiographies, diaries and poetry. In English sessions higher up the school, many develop their writing skills suitably. They use their knowledge and skills well to write extended answers and essays. Many pupils convey information clearly, for example when they consider the impact of war on British society in the twentieth century. Overall, the majority of pupils across the school write with suitable accuracy. However, others make frequent spelling and grammar errors and do not use capital letters and basic punctuation consistently and accurately enough. Lower down the school, a minority have weak letter formation and use capital letters indiscriminately. Due to inconsistent opportunities, pupils do not write extended pieces of work consistently well across the curriculum. A few do not structure their work well enough with paragraphs and sub-headings. A minority of pupils across the school do not develop a fluent handwriting style.

In mathematics sessions, many pupils make strong progress in number skills and use their understanding well to solve problems and perform mental arithmetic. For example, in Year 3, pupils read temperature scales accurately and compare volumes of liquids. In Year 6, pupils confidently solve simple problems and explore place value. These pupils identify simple fractions, decimal and percentage equivalences well. Older pupils use their number skills successfully, for example when calculating the perimeter and area of shapes and the size of a missing angle. In other subjects across the curriculum, many pupils solve a variety of relevant numeracy problems successfully. Overall, many pupils' data handling skills are suitable. They display data in tables with correct units and decimal places and normally analyse this data well by calculating means and drawing graphs. However, across relevant subjects, where there are opportunities to use numeracy, pupils do not always use the most appropriate graphs to represent data. Too often, they draw them untidily and inaccurately.

Overall, most pupils develop their digital skills competently over time. This is a notable strength, particularly higher up the school. The youngest pupils use their skills confidently, for example when experimenting with programmable toys. In Year 5, they create web pages about the rainforest, using a range of approaches to make them interesting and informative. Older pupils develop their digital skills well in a range of subjects. For example, in music they use software to 'rebuild' popular songs using techniques such as looping, fading and delay. In science, they create an energy usage calculator to forecast the cost of an electricity bill.

When given opportunities, pupils further their thinking through solving problems and considering ethical questions. Younger pupils ponder thoughtfully whether animals in the zoo appear to be happy in their enclosures and explain the clues that lead them to their conclusions. In science, older pupils develop their thinking skills well when they consider the ethics behind Fritz Haber's process of producing ammonia which is used to make mustard gas and fertilizer.

Across the school, pupils generally make considerable progress in their creative skills. Younger pupils produce good quality designs inspired by Welsh fashion designers. They demonstrate imagination and valuable creative skills when designing and painting imaginary castles, mimicking the artistic style of Andy Warhol. Older pupils convey what the Rhymney Valley means to them through collages. They combine different materials with watercolour paints appropriately to produce well-crafted artwork. Pupils in the nurture class develop worthwhile creative skills when they perform short pieces of popular music on keyboards and drums.

In physical education sessions, many older pupils develop their physical skills well. They develop good hand-eye co-ordination when playing tennis or when batting and fielding in rounders. Younger pupils develop their physical skills well, through a good range of activities, for example squeezing clay through kitchen utensils to make 'worms'. They also develop beneficial gross motor skills and improve their fitness when they use the school trikes at playtime. Older pupils apply their fine motor skills suitably when they learn to play the ukulele.

Overall, many pupils make reasonable progress in their Welsh language skills over time, and a few develop a secure ability to speak and write fluently in Welsh. Pupils in the reception class use basic greetings and talk about the weather and have a

good grasp of simple vocabulary when they practise singing familiar Welsh songs. As they progress through the school, pupils enhance their vocabulary and understanding of basic grammar. The majority of the oldest pupils develop a suitable range of vocabulary in Welsh sessions which enables them to talk ably about their likes and preferences. They gather information from basic reading texts suitably. Overall, the majority write short basic sentences in the present tense in Welsh accurately. A few write fluently and at length, varying their sentences and write accurately using the present, past and future tenses.

In the past two years, nearly all pupils who left school at the end of key stage 4 moved on to further education, training or employment. Most pupils in the sixth form gain places in their university of choice.

**Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Most pupils value being part of the inclusive community of Idris Davies School. They recognise that leaders and staff promote equal opportunities and fairness, in line with the school's aim of giving 'Every Pupil - Every Opportunity - Every Day'. They enjoy coming to school and feel safe.

Most pupils understand the school's expectations regarding behaviour. They value the rewards system and understand the consequences of poor behaviour. Most pupils believe the school deals well with any bullying incidents. Most pupils treat adults and each other courteously and greet visitors warmly. Nearly all pupils know who to talk to if they need any support and understand how they can access pastoral and learning support.

Most pupils arrive punctually to their sessions, and many settle quickly to work. Overall, many pupils work effectively in pairs and small groups. They respect the contribution of others during question-and-answer sessions and respond well in class discussion. Many pupils speak enthusiastically about their learning and can identify work that they are proud of. Nearly all pupils who access the broad range of support facilities collaborate effectively with staff and are well behaved. They engage well in their learning and benefit from the support that they receive.

The youngest pupils listen well to staff and follow basic instructions with support. They engage enthusiastically in their activities and choose independently from a range of tasks which they carry out with determination and care. These pupils learn how to work together in small groups, share ideas and create pieces of work collaboratively. They play together nicely during breaks, are friendly and kind towards each other and support each other's learning effectively. In a few cases, older pupils' attitudes to learning hamper their progress. These pupils do not sustain concentration, they do not persevere in tasks and are passive in sessions. The majority of pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and respond appropriately to feedback from teachers where expectations are clear.

Many pupils discuss matters of equality and diversity well through worthwhile opportunities, for example through the Rainbow Club and sessions on misogyny. This helps to reinforce the school's strong focus on the importance of healthy relationships.

A few pupils, including those with ALN, have the opportunity to contribute to leadership roles within the 'IDS Senedd', for example as part of the school councils, Criw Cymraeg and sport leader groups. The work of these groups has led to the introduction of more extra-curricular activities and an outdoor gym. Older pupils support younger pupils well. For example, sixth form pupils provide beneficial support to younger pupils in their mathematics sessions. Recently, a group of pupils across the age range has undertaken peer mediator training in order to support the school's restorative way of working and to further develop positive relationships among pupils and staff.

Pupils benefit from participation in an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. Younger pupils attend lunchtime and after school sessions such as dance fitness, coding and board games. Older pupils attend the construction and engineering, reading and darts clubs. Pupils value the musical instrument and vocal coaching sessions that are funded by the school. Pupils also benefit from a wide variety of sporting activities. These clubs are generally well attended. Most pupils understand the importance of making healthy choices, but a few do not make healthy decisions, for example when choosing drinks.

Many pupils are developing positive attitudes towards attending school regularly and clearly articulate the importance of good attendance. However, whole-school attendance continues to be a concern for the school, particularly for pupils with ALN. Although the number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced over time, the levels remain high following the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Teaching and learning experiences**

Throughout the school, teachers know their pupils well. They foster positive working relationships with pupils and have suitably high expectations of the way that they should behave. As a result, most classes are calm and purposeful learning environments.

In many cases, teaching allows pupils to make beneficial progress in their learning. Where it is most effective, teachers have clear objectives that focus on developing pupils' knowledge and skills. Many teachers explain new ideas and concepts clearly and generally question pupils helpfully to develop their thinking. Many teachers give pupils useful thinking time before expecting a response and allow them to discuss their ideas with a partner before sharing their thoughts with others. This helps pupils to develop their thinking skills beneficially.

A majority of teachers monitor pupils' learning and engagement carefully and have suitable expectations of what they can achieve. They provide pupils with useful verbal feedback that helps them to understand what they are doing well and what they need to improve. A minority of teachers have high expectations of pupils' learning, such as in the reception class where pupils discuss challenging concepts about shape and space. A few teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to influence what and how they learn. For example, younger pupils collaborate well and prepare for a mock wedding in a local church. This engages pupils in their learning successfully.

In a few cases, where teaching is less effective, teachers have low expectations of what pupils can achieve. They provide learning activities at too low a level and do not challenge pupils well enough. These teachers give insufficiently clear explanations, and their questioning does not encourage pupils' thinking. For instance, it focuses too much on asking pupils to recall basic information. In the older year groups, a few sessions proceed at too slow a pace and pupils achieve too little. A few teachers accept poor work too readily.

A minority of teachers provide pupils with helpful written comments on their work that allow them to understand what they have done well, or how and where they need to make improvements. However, this is not done consistently well enough. In a few sessions, pupils have purposeful opportunities to consider the quality of their own work against helpful success criteria. However, they do not always have clear enough guidance to help them make meaningful improvements to their work.

In general, leaders have a clear vision for their curriculum and how it can inspire pupils to become successful, aspirational learners and prepare them for life after school. Staff have experimented with a variety of new approaches, and this has been supported beneficially by collaborative work with pupils and local primary schools. In many cases, leaders have evaluated these approaches thoroughly and adapted them thoughtfully.

Leaders work tirelessly to ensure that the curriculum is accessible to all pupils, with a particularly strong focus on mitigating the effects of poverty. They carefully adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of individuals and groups of pupils, for example through the 'Hwb' provision which supports pupils in danger of disengagement. As a result, the curriculum meets the needs of nearly all pupils well. It builds appropriately on previous phases of learning. At Key Stage 4, pupils can choose from a suitably wide range of courses, including vocational options such as construction, catering and engineering. The school uses external partnerships suitably to extend the range of courses available to pupils in the sixth form.

Across the curriculum, pupils have a good range of opportunities to practise and develop their numeracy skills, as well as their problem-solving and creativity. In many cases, pupils have similarly beneficial opportunities to develop their literacy skills, although there is not a consistently effective approach to develop their extended writing or advanced reading skills. Across the age range, pupils benefit from an extensive range of valuable opportunities to develop their digital skills.

Support for pupils with weaker literacy and numeracy skills is a strength of the school. These pupils receive valuable, tailored support that is closely monitored and evaluated. For example, pupils in the Year 7 nurture class are helped to improve their skills so that they can integrate successfully into mainstream provision.

The school has suitable provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills. Younger pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop their understanding of Welsh culture and heritage, for example by participating in folk dancing, studying Welsh artists and designers or making love spoons on St Dwynwen's Day. Older pupils have suitable opportunities to learn about Wales, such as when Year 8 pupils make masks inspired by the Mabinogion. Younger pupils benefit from a range of opportunities to learn outside the classroom, such as when they help a local

beekeeper or hunt for mini beasts in the woods. Trips and visits extend the learning of older pupils appropriately, for example when pupils studying construction visit the Heads of the Valleys roadworks. The school makes suitable arrangements to ensure pupils develop their cultural awareness and understanding of their place in Wales. Staff plan a wide range of opportunities for pupils to explore their local culture, for example by finding out about local artists and poets.

The personal and social education programme provides pupils up to Year 9 with valuable opportunities to learn about, for example, healthy relationships, substance misuse and the importance of a healthy diet. Pupils learn about the importance of equality and diversity through a range of curricular and extra-curricular activities, such as learning about the life of Alan Turing or participating in awareness days for neurodiversity, sign language and Down's syndrome. However, Year 10 and 11 pupils do not have sufficient curriculum time for personal and social education.

Provision to support more able and talented pupils is a notable strength. Valuable programmes to help these pupils and their families learn about higher education opportunities play an important role in raising their aspirations. A range of strategies provides pupils with valuable information about careers and the world of work. For example, ex-pupils visit the school to talk about their lives after school. This provision is supported well by external partnerships, such as links with local businesses.

**Care, support and guidance**

The pastoral support for pupils is a significant strength of the school. Leaders and staff know their pupils well and work with dedication to build supportive working relationships and ensure any issues arising are dealt with quickly and sensitively. Most staff take a restorative approach to dealing with poor behaviour, and support pupils to take responsibility for their actions and make better choices. As a result, many pupils behave well, and feel valued and proud to be a part of the school community.

The care and support that staff provide for pupils, particularly for the more vulnerable, is exemplary. Leaders ensure there are effective systems in place to collect a wide range of information to identify pupils who may benefit from further support. Staff use this information skilfully to react quickly and sensitively to the needs of pupils and make effective changes to provision across the school.

There is extensive provision for supporting pupils with additional learning needs. The school has made strong progress towards meeting the requirements of the ALN (Wales) 2018 Act and has effective strategies to identify pupils' additional learning needs. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCO) ensures that the needs of pupils are shared with staff to help them provide suitable support for pupils during lessons. Leaders and staff, particularly those lower down the school, ensure that the learning environment and teaching approaches support all pupils suitably, for example by developing autism friendly classrooms. There is effective provision to support children who are looked after by the local authority (CLA). Designated staff monitor their progress carefully and provide beneficial care and support for their emotional and academic development.

Leaders plan a wide range of intervention strategies to address the social, emotional, and academic needs of pupils. They match the correct level of support to their needs and this provision is delivered by a highly skilled and dedicated team of teachers and support staff. Staff monitor the individual targets of pupils with ALN and work well together to adjust provision or accelerate support as required. As a result, provision across the school has a positive impact on pupils' social and academic skills. Staff keep parents of pupils with ALN well informed about their children's progress. They provide regular opportunities for parents to contribute to education plans and the school works effectively to involve pupils in sharing their views. For example, many pupils with ALN work alongside staff to produce one-page profiles, which express their ambitions for the future and suggest how they can be supported in class.

A particular strength of the school is its thoughtful approach to supporting pupils' learning and progress as they transition from Year 6 to year 7 within the school and from partner primary schools. For example, the school's basic skills class supports pupils to make strong progress in their literacy, numeracy, and well-being.

Leaders ensure good opportunities for more able pupils to further develop their skills in more challenging contexts. For example, the school provides beneficial opportunities for Year 6 pupils to work with a university PhD student to research and write a dissertation on Climate Change. This provision helps raise aspirations for their future learning, for example by including visits for pupils and their families to experience life at universities across the country.

The school ensures that pupils contribute well to school life, and express their ideas and opinions.. Staff share the results of a well-being survey with members of the school council who suggest and implement change to address concerns following the pandemic, such as extending the lunchtime period.

Overall, there are suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of ethical issues and examine their spiritual beliefs. For example, there are well-planned daily acts of collective worship which encourage pupils to reflect upon stories from world religions, and upon important issues such as diversity and equality.

Staff across the school encourage high aspirations for pupils and widen their understanding and experience of the world of work. Leaders work closely together to identify opportunities for all pupils to experience the world of work as part of their curriculum studies. For example, local professionals including firefighters and nurses visit to talk to younger pupils about their roles in society. Older pupils take part in forensic hacking workshops led by a cyber security firm as part of their computational science work.

Leaders have introduced comprehensive systems to encourage pupils to attend school regularly and on time. They monitor pupils' attendance robustly and respond to areas of concern quickly. There are effective arrangements in school to provide pastoral support for pupils who do not attend regularly enough. For example, the school's 'attendance circles' for pupils and parents help them understand the importance of regular attendance and, as a result, the majority of pupils taking part in these sessions make suitable progress. However overall, the school's provision has not had sufficient impact on ensuring that all pupils attend school regularly.

The school's safeguarding culture is a significant strength. Child protection procedures are robust and understood by all staff. The school meets statutory arrangements to train staff and governors in how to keep pupils safe, including in a wide range of other safeguarding areas. The support and care for pupils who are at risk of harm and those who have had adverse experiences is a notable strength. Leaders place a substantial focus on gathering all relevant information about pupils and their families to enable them to identify and implement the most appropriate support. The school has adopted and built on a valuable multi-agency partnership approach to support vulnerable pupils and their families. As a result of all these measures, the school provides a safe, nurturing and reassuring environment for its pupils.

**Leadership and management**

The headteacher is a passionate, enthusiastic, and determined leader who has overcome many barriers in establishing and developing Idris Davies School. He has a clear vision of providing 'every pupil, every opportunity, every day'. This vision is embraced by staff and governors and extends to purposeful collaboration with partner primary schools.

Leaders continue to develop their vision for an all-age school. In the strongest examples, younger pupils benefit from regular opportunities to experience specialist provision such as attending lessons in the music and French departments and using catering facilities. However, not all opportunities are fully realised and, in some instances, there remains a disjoint between primary and secondary phases.

The headteacher is supported well by an extensive leadership team. Their roles and responsibilities are clear and well understood by staff. Since the school's inception, leaders have had a positive impact on aspects such as the safeguarding culture, reducing impact of poverty and pupil well-being.

The school has clear line management arrangements and middle leaders benefit from regular scheduled meetings where senior leaders offer sound support and appropriate challenge. As a result, most middle leaders ensure that their departments address the school's areas for development suitably. The school has robust performance management arrangements for teachers and support staff, that include setting targets that are aligned closely with its priorities. These targets focus adequately on the impact of provision on pupils' progress, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Leaders challenge underperformance well and provide tailored support for individuals.

Leaders approach national priorities positively, particularly in relation to tackling the effect of poverty. This is a notable feature of the work of the school. For example, leaders plan purposeful strategies to raise aspirations of pupils in low-income families from an early age. In addition, they provide resources for cooking sessions and ensure that these pupils have suitable uniform and sports equipment. Leaders place a clear emphasis on involving pupils' families as much as possible.

The school has well-established processes for evaluating its own practice. This includes an annual calendar of quality assurance activities. Leaders draw upon a wide range of information, including first hand evidence such as book scrutiny and

learning walks. In general, leaders come to accurate conclusions, although a few do not focus precisely enough on what needs to be improved in teaching and learning. As a result, the impact these leaders have on improving teaching and pupils' standards is inconsistent. Leaders provide teachers with useful feedback following lesson observations. They provide valuable opportunities for teachers to participate in quality assurance activities, for example by taking part in departmental meetings focussed on book reviews. In addition, leaders participate in regular scrutiny and moderation activities with partner primary schools.

When planning for improvement, leaders identify suitable whole-school priorities. They consider the findings of previous self-evaluation activities, and place a clear emphasis on national priorities, such as tackling the effects of poverty. Leaders identify appropriate action steps, allocate responsibilities, and set timeframes clearly. This includes allocating link governors for each priority area, which enhances accountability. Middle leaders identify specific actions that support whole-school priorities in their areas of responsibility. Leaders seek the views of pupils, parents, governors and staff on a regular basis. For example, they analyse the findings of parent questionnaires and provide useful updates via video clips that explain how the school has responded. The school communicates appropriately with parents, for example through social media platforms and praise cards. They adapt their methods of communication well in order to reach as many parents as possible.

Leaders create a strong culture of professional learning. They identify teachers' developmental needs appropriately and organise suitable support. For example, they invite teachers to participate in working groups focussed on different areas of classroom practice such as questioning techniques and arrange for the school's coaches and mentors to provide assistance. Staff are beginning to adapt their teaching after observing sessions in other parts of the school. They receive valuable opportunities to engage in training related to their career progression, such as the National Senior Leadership Programme.

The governors are very supportive of the school and take on their roles enthusiastically. They participate in learning walks and work scrutiny and have a sound understanding of many of the main strengths and areas for improvement. They offer a suitable level of challenge and accountability through their numerous sub-committees. The governing body ensures that the food and drink provided by the school comply with the legislation.

The headteacher and business manager carefully manage the school budget. Leaders make effective use of grants, including the pupil development grant. This has contributed positively to the opportunities for pupils from low-income families to access experiences that financial constraints would otherwise prevent. For example, they provide free instrumental lessons to any pupils who require them, subsidise school trips and fund visits to university open days.

## 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 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, where appropriate
- visit a broad sample of lessons, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on  pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

## Copies of the report

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

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication.  Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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