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

A report on

Victoria Primary School

Cornerswell Road
Penarth
CF64 2UZ

Date of inspection: November 2023

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Victoria Primary School

Name of provider	Victoria Primary School
Local authority	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	None
Number of pupils on roll	475
Pupils of statutory school age	358
Number in nursery classes	58
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%)	7.2%
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%)	7.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/06/2015
Start date of inspection	13/11/2023

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

Most pupils in Victoria Primary School engage with their learning happily. They behave well in lessons and around the school and show strong levels of well-being. Most pupils develop as confident communicators and are proud of their school. They enjoy what they learn and speak enthusiastically about the variety of experiences the school provides. Nearly all pupils demonstrate respect for adults and for their peers. Many contribute purposefully to developments in the school through their participation in pupil leadership groups.

Teachers and teaching assistants know pupils well. They form warm and nurturing relationships that help pupils to feel relaxed and valued. They plan a range of stimulating learning experiences that motivate and inspire most pupils successfully. As a result, most pupils show positive attitudes towards their learning. Teachers set clear expectations in lessons. They model intended outcomes effectively so that pupils understand what they need to do to make progress. Teachers and teaching assistants question pupils appropriately to develop and extend their thinking and to provide help when needed. In general, they plan for the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills effectively. However, they do not provide enough opportunity for pupils to write at length or to develop their use of digital skills fully. In addition, pupils' confidence to use their spoken Welsh in lessons and around the school is underdeveloped.

Leaders provide clear direction and model professional behaviours effectively. They foster collaboration successfully and support the whole staff to work well as a team. This ensures that staff share high expectations and promotes consistency in core aspects of the school's work, such as in the quality of teaching and the care all staff show towards pupils. Leaders work with staff to evaluate the school's performance purposefully, for instance to ensure that the school's curriculum is relevant and engaging. They identify key aspects for school development appropriately. However, leaders do not always target action keenly enough on those aspects of teaching that will bring about improvement quickly.

Recommendations

R1 Ensure that school improvement processes prioritise those actions that will bring about the greatest improvement in pupils' standards and progress

R2 Improve pupils' ability to use their spoken Welsh confidently

R3 Strengthen opportunities for all pupils to develop and apply their writing and digital skills fully

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils start school with skills at least in line with those expected for their age. During their time in the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make suitable progress in their learning from their individual starting points.

Most pupils develop strong speaking and listening skills. Many younger pupils talk confidently, for instance to describe what makes a good friend. They listen well to their peers and to adults and take turns in conversation patiently. Most older pupils reflect on their thinking and that of others carefully during discussions. Many explain their opinions clearly, for instance by referring to what they have learned previously to support their view.

Most pupils show positive attitudes towards reading. For example, many younger pupils enjoy sharing a book with friends in their reading corner. Most begin to recognise initial letter sounds quickly. They build on this knowledge to blend sounds and to break down longer words effectively. By Year 2, most pupils read with appropriate fluency and begin to infer meaning from descriptions. Most older pupils use punctuation to help them phrase their reading successfully, for instance by using speech marks as a cue to alter their expression when reading aloud. By Year 6, most pupils show a strong understanding of what they read. For example, they infer that the Mum in a story about evacuees appears unemotional when saying goodbye, to hide her worry from the children. Most older pupils use their well-developed skimming and scanning skills to locate relevant information efficiently, for example to research facts about the Swansea Blitz.

Many pupils develop as enthusiastic writers. Younger pupils quickly begin to use their knowledge of letter sounds to support their independent writing successfully. They show a suitable understanding of simple grammar and develop their letter formation appropriately. By Year 2, most pupils begin to write at increasing length, for instance to produce a short story linked to their topic in class. Most older pupils plan and draft their writing effectively. They include relevant features, such as simile and metaphor, to suit the purpose of their writing well. In the best instances, pupils make creative use of the knowledge they develop in their wider learning to include pertinent details that add authenticity to their writing. For example, most pupils in Year 5 draw inspiration from their visit to a former colliery to write engaging diary entries from the point of view of a child working as a trapper. Generally, however, pupils do not write at length often enough or enhance their writing to achieve the highest standards they are capable of consistently.

Many pupils develop a basic knowledge of a variety of Welsh language patterns and vocabulary. Most younger pupils count in Welsh confidently and use a suitable range of words to describe their feelings and the weather accurately. As pupils move through the school, they extend their knowledge, often through a variety of focused writing activities. However, older pupils, rely heavily on written prompts to aid their speech and are not confident to use their spoken Welsh in classes or around the school.

Most pupils develop a good understanding of a suitably broad range of mathematical concepts as they move through the school. The youngest pupils begin to recognise lighter and heavier when comparing pumpkins on a balance scale and pupils in the reception class count confidently when adding ingredients to a pretend soup. Most pupils build on these early skills progressively. For example, pupils in Year 2 use their developing knowledge of place value and number bonds to aid their addition of single and two-digit numbers. Most older pupils use a widening variety of strategies to calculate competently, for instance to carry out column addition and grid multiplication accurately. They make worthwhile use of practical resources and collaborate well with partners to aid their progress in lessons. By Year 6, many use their mathematical knowledge to support their reasoning effectively, for instance to demonstrate how a rectangle may have different or equal numerical values for its area and perimeter. Pupils' ability to apply their mathematical skills purposefully in other areas of the curriculum is less well developed.

Across the school, most pupils use their digital skills to support aspects of their wider learning appropriately. For example, most pupils use online platforms independently to practise their number skills and to develop their reading comprehension. Most younger pupils use tablet devices confidently, for instance to record verbal instructions in preparation for their writing. Most older pupils use specific skills, such as creating presentations, to enhance their communication. Overall, however, pupils do not develop a full range of digital skills systematically and this limits their capacity to use helpful tools to benefit their learning. For example, pupils are not confident in using spreadsheets or databases to organise or analyse information efficiently.

Nearly all pupils develop physical skills that are appropriate to their stage of development. For example, the youngest pupils show good dexterity and coordination when using tools and resources in a variety of practical activities. Older pupils show sound control of movement and balance and many participate skilfully and with enjoyment in lessons and after school sporting activities. Most pupils engage enthusiastically with a range of worthwhile opportunities that develop their creative skills beneficially. For instance, they experiment with different materials and techniques to develop their understanding of a range of visual art forms and express their ideas and personality creatively through dance and performance.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils have high levels of well-being and feel safe within the school's inclusive environment. They show a caring and considerate attitude towards others. Most pupils know who to go to if they have a problem and value the support they receive from staff. Most pupils behave well in class and when moving around the school. At playtimes, nearly all pupils play well together and share the play equipment fairly.

Most pupils understand the importance of eating a balanced diet and participating in regular exercise. They enjoy developing their physical skills and fitness during the school day and in the sports-based after-school clubs. In addition, they develop their personal interests well, for example when writing exciting articles for the school newspaper in the journalism club.

Most pupils understand the importance of staying safe when using digital devices. For example, they know not to share information or photographs with strangers online and they understand that not everything they see on the internet is necessarily true. A few pupils discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using artificial intelligence, giving balanced arguments for and against.

Many older pupils talk about their rights as children confidently. They understand that not everyone is able to exercise their rights and that this is unfair. For example, they recognise that access to healthcare is not universal across the world. Pupils in the diversity group talk passionately about their role to promote inclusivity across the school. As they move through the school, most pupils show an increasing awareness of the need to treat everyone with respect and to celebrate their differences. Many pupils enjoy sharing their own cultures and beliefs with peers.

Many pupils have suitable opportunities to develop their leadership skills through the good range of pupil voice committees that the school offers. Pupils talk about their roles confidently and identify how their work has made a difference to the school and to the local community. For example, the eco committee promote understanding of the benefit of restricting the school's energy use through their 'switch it off' fortnight and improve the local area by carrying out a litter pick on Penarth Pier.

Many older pupils speak with enthusiasm about the opportunities they have to raise questions in their topic work. They contribute their ideas thoughtfully and enjoy their role in setting home-learning tasks. When given the opportunity, pupils further develop their independence when they decide how they will approach and present their work. Pupils in the curriculum task group are beginning to influence the way the school curriculum is developing, for example through their recent work with senior leaders to increase the range of independent learning activities they experience.

Nearly all pupils settle quickly in lessons. They engage well in their learning and remain focused for appropriate periods of time. Most pupils participate actively in opportunities that develop their problem solving and creative skills. For example, older pupils enjoy planning and organising their own charity stalls, calculating cost and profit to raise money for Children in Need. Many pupils begin to show resilience and persevere when they find things tricky. For example, younger pupils show strong determination when using the monkey bars at playtime.

Most pupils listen carefully to verbal feedback and begin to reflect on what they are doing well and how they can improve their work. Many older pupils are beginning to use feedback to edit their work, for instance to improve their writing. Nearly all pupils work on tasks independently and make sensible decisions about how to carry out their work productively. They use a range of useful tools and resources that help them to make progress effectively. For example, most pupils throughout the school use their toolkit resources and personal targets to support their learning well.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has made sound progress in developing its approach towards the Curriculum for Wales. It provides a broad and stimulating variety of learning experiences that meet the interest of most pupils successfully. Teachers use a range of worthwhile visits to provide experiences that inspire pupils' learning effectively. For example, Year 6 pupils visit a local science discovery centre to develop their knowledge of space as part of their Stargazers topic. Many pupils talk excitedly about these visits, which help to support their development beneficially.

The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of their Welsh heritage. For example, through their topic work, pupils learn about the features and history of the surrounding area including the nearby coast and the locality's industrial heritage. Most teachers draw skilfully on these contexts to plan lessons that develop pupils' knowledge and understanding purposefully. As a result, most pupils find their lessons interesting and apply themselves to their learning with enthusiasm. Teachers have recently strengthened opportunities for pupils to learn about the diversity of cultures and experiences within Wales and in the wider world. This is beginning to impact positively on pupils' understanding of the rich variety of contributions and perspectives that inform their role as citizens.

Teaching across the school is effective. Adults create a positive environment in classes that enables pupils to relax and to settle well. They use a variety of strategies to promote and manage pupils' behaviour consistently. Most teachers share specific learning objectives and explain tasks clearly. For example, they provide useful examples and demonstrate what pupils need to do to be successful in their activity. They plan lessons carefully and ensure that learning is purposeful and proceeds at a good pace. Teachers and teaching assistants collaborate well together to provide valuable and effective support to pupils within class and through a range of interventions. However, teachers tend to over-direct pupils' learning. For example, teachers' frequent use of worksheets in many lessons restricts pupils' capacity to decide how they organise and present their work.

Most teachers recap pupils' prior learning effectively. This helps pupils to use what they already know to support their progress. Nearly all teachers use questioning well. For instance, they use pit stops during lessons to check pupils' understanding and to clarify pupils' learning beneficially. They provide suitable opportunities for pupils to reflect on their progress and that of their peers. While most teachers provide pupils with helpful feedback, they do not always provide sufficient time for pupils to respond to comments in order to improve their work fully.

Teachers plan for the development of pupils' speaking, listening and reading skills well. This enables pupils to use these skills in their wider learning successfully. However, provision to ensure that pupils develop their writing and digital skills fully is less effective. As a result, pupils do not always write as well as they could or use their digital skills to support their learning thoroughly. Teachers plan appropriately for the progressive development of pupils' numeracy skills.

Provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is underdeveloped. A minority of adults model Welsh effectively, for instance by using everyday language such as

instructions during lessons. However, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their use of spoken Welsh as they move through the school.

Most teachers enable pupils to contribute their ideas for what they learn. For example, the pupils' curriculum task group plays a leading role in setting the focus of themed weeks. These opportunities ensure that pupils feel a sense of ownership in their learning. Staff enrich pupils' experience by providing a good variety of before- and after-school activities, such as the school orchestra and the popular football and netball clubs.

The school's curriculum supports the development of pupils' social and emotional skills effectively. For example, staff make effective use of outdoor spaces to engage pupils in practical, small group tasks purposefully. They provide suitable resources and support pupils to make sensible decisions, for instance about the level of challenge they set themselves when completing tasks independently. All staff ensure that classroom environments are vibrant and well-organised spaces that support pupils to engage positively in lessons and celebrate their learning appropriately.

Care, support and guidance

Victoria Primary is a caring, inclusive school that places a high priority on the development of pupils' well-being. Provision to support pupils with social, emotional or behavioural needs is a strength of the school. Highly trained support staff provide a calming influence and use a range of strategies sensitively to help pupils to regulate their behaviour successfully. The school's 'Rainbow Room' offers a warm, welcoming space where pupils can go if they feel the need. Over time, these approaches ensure that nearly all pupils develop their resilience effectively.

Across the school, relationships are strong and staff work closely with families to gain a detailed understanding of pupils' needs. They use this knowledge to overcome barriers to learning and to help pupils succeed. Support for pupils and families on entry to school is particularly effective. For example, nursery staff arrange online calls with every parent before their child starts at the school. This helps staff to build positive relationships with families from an early stage.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is effective. Dedicated support staff provide beneficial support for all pupils. They use a range of approaches and interventions consistently well to support pupils' development of their literacy and numeracy skills. Leaders work purposefully with staff, pupils and their parents to identify pupils' needs and to plan the most suitable approach to support pupils to learn. They monitor and evaluate the impact of provision carefully and work with staff to provide additional advice when needed. As a result, most pupils with ALN make at least appropriate progress.

The school celebrates pupils as unique individuals, embracing their differences and encouraging them to share their own culture and experiences. For example, a few pupils enjoy teaching their peers about their recent celebration of the Hindu festival, Diwali. Through these worthwhile opportunities, pupils develop respect and tolerance for one another. A relevant programme of school assemblies supports pupils to develop an understanding of equality, diversity and of their own moral values effectively. As a result, pupils recognise the importance of valuing everyone's

differences and treating others with kindness. The work of the pupil diversity group enhances this understanding successfully. For example, the group's recent letters to school meal providers offer appropriate suggestions to include food from other cultures on the lunch menu. However, the school's work to develop pupils' understanding of spirituality is less well-developed.

The school enables all pupils to work with specialist music teachers to enhance their understanding of music and the performing arts beneficially. For example, the school ensures that all pupils have the chance to learn how to play a musical instrument. Leaders make sure that finance is not a barrier to pupil participation. As pupils move through the school, they begin to develop their musical talents through participation in the school orchestra and performance for parents. The school utilises its strong links with the local high school to provide pupils with valuable opportunities to perform on a stage to a wider audience.

A wide range of pupil voice groups provide pupils with worthwhile experiences that develop their skills as leaders. For example, the pupil curriculum group consult with parents to research and review the school's arrangements for homework. Older pupils have good opportunities to act as role models and to provide support for other pupils, for example when they promote and reward the good behaviour of others during assemblies.

The school provides a wide range of engaging extra-curricular activities. These enable pupils to improve their physical fitness, take part in a team or to learn a new skill. For example, the school football club helps pupils to develop their ball skills and understanding of the game effectively. In addition, pupils enjoy the opportunity to compete in matches against other schools.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding are appropriate and give no cause for concern. There are robust procedures in place to manage pupils' attendance and, as a result, attendance continues to improve.

Leadership and management

The headteacher shares her vision with all staff clearly and this is evident in the positive ethos of the school. She sets high expectations for staff and prioritises their well-being and that of pupils consistently. Her mantra of 'every day counts' is well understood by the school community who share a common ambition to create a positive school environment in which pupils thrive.

Senior leaders model and promote professional values and behaviours effectively. They work well as a team and this contributes positively to the overall ethos of the school. For example, leaders collaborate purposefully to provide clear direction for the school's curriculum teams to develop provision across the areas of learning and experience. Leaders promote clear aims and strategic objectives, which focus appropriately on school improvement and on national priorities, such as the need to improve standards of writing and to develop pupils' Welsh language skills.

The headteacher and other leaders use appropriate processes to identify school priorities. For example, leaders ensure that self-evaluation activities make suitable use of a range of first-hand evidence to inform decision-making. The school's

arrangements ensure that staff at all levels make an appropriate contribution to this process and develop a shared understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Whilst leaders accurately identify the main priorities in relation to pupil progress, they do not always prioritise the most effective methods to secure improvement efficiently. For example, leaders have not addressed rapidly enough the need to provide appropriate, focused teaching to develop pupils' oracy skills in Welsh.

Overall, senior leaders have a sound understanding of the quality of teaching across the school. They use a range of worthwhile approaches, including coaching and mentoring, to support staff to develop their practice further. The headteacher uses performance management processes effectively and holds teachers to account robustly. This results in a consistent approach to teaching across the school.

Leaders create a positive professional learning culture. They ensure that opportunities for professional learning link purposefully to both whole school priorities and the individual needs of staff. Professional learning includes an appropriate focus on developing high quality teaching through sharing good practice both within and beyond the school. For example, the school's nursery staff make valuable visits to other settings to enhance their knowledge. This has resulted in beneficial improvements to the learning environment and the quality of provision for the youngest pupils. Leaders and staff work closely with the staff from cluster schools. This provides useful opportunities to develop a shared approach to the curriculum. The school effectively supports the development of trainee teachers through work with a range of universities.

Governors have an appropriate understanding of their roles and responsibilities and work positively alongside school leaders to establish priorities for improvement. Their work with senior leaders provides them with a suitable understanding of the needs of the school. Governors are beginning to take part in monitoring activities, such as learning walks, to provide them with a better understanding of the school's overall performance. For example, through discussion with pupils they recognise pupil voice as a particular strength. However, governors do not have a clear enough understanding of the overall progress pupils make.

The headteacher works closely with the governing body to manage the school's budget efficiently. They draw on relevant expertise to inform decisions and work hard together to address any financial challenges. Leaders pay due regard to challenging the impact of poverty, using the pupil development grant appropriately to target areas of need. They monitor the progress of learners carefully, to ensure that all pupils from across the range of socio-economic backgrounds make at least suitable progress.

Governors have a clear understanding of the school's work in promoting healthy eating and drinking and support the school's policy appropriately. Leaders have established an effective safeguarding culture. They ensure that staff understand policies and procedures and that they receive relevant training to carry out their roles effectively. For example, whole-staff training to promote positive behaviour across the school ensures that pupils feel happy and safe.

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)

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:

Publications Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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