A report on

Deighton Primary School

Stockton Way
Tredegar
Blaenau Gwent
NP22 3ES

Date of inspection: December 2023

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

This inspection was undertaken as part of pilot inspection arrangements. As a result, this report may be slightly different in format to other published reports for providers in the sector.

Evaluation

Main evaluation

Leaders, staff and governors of Deighton Primary have worked effectively as a community to develop an inclusive school focused on raising aspirations for all pupils and developing them as resilient, lifelong learners. Relationships between pupils and adults are strong, and the school's partnership with parents is outstanding. Most pupils behave well, and are friendly, courteous and respectful. The support for pupils with additional learning needs, and those who are vulnerable, is effective. In particular, pupils appreciate the high-quality care and support when they experience social and emotional difficulties. Nearly all feel safe. They are confident that leaders and staff will look after them whenever they need their help.

The school provides a stimulating, engaging and nurturing learning environment for all pupils. This supports many to make suitable or better progress, often from very low starting points. The youngest pupils settle well into daily routines and benefit from the many purposeful opportunities, indoors and outside, that help them to explore, problem-solve, and develop their language and physical skills successfully. Most pupils make strong progress in developing their social and communication skills. They listen well to adults and, by Year 6, many enjoy drama activities, collaborate effectively and discuss their learning activities confidently.

Cameo: Enriching pupils' lives through cultural experiences

There is strong provision for pupils' cultural and social development. Leaders use grant funding to enrich pupils' lives with learning opportunities they might not otherwise experience. For example, they fly to Scotland to visit heritage sites, and travel to London to watch a theatre show, as part of their 'We're off to see the wizard' topic. After this, collaboration with professional musicians and a local theatre company helps to develop pupils' creative skills, their appreciation of the performing arts and raises their aspirations about possible future careers.

Staff provide a wide range of authentic learning experiences and capture pupils' interests by giving them carefully considered opportunities to influence what they learn. Older pupils develop their independent learning and creative skills well through making choices about how they learn or present their work. This includes Year 6 pupils having the freedom to explore how to convey values, such as empathy and compassion, in their artwork as part of Remembrance Day reflections on the consequences of war. While pupils use digital technology well to support their learning across the curriculum, their understanding and use of graphs and databases is less well developed.

Provision for the progressive development of pupils' mathematical and reading skills is effective. Both have been a focus for improvement in recent years and staff have benefited from the school's weekly professional learning programme to support the development of their skills and knowledge. This has made a positive difference to pupils' progress in the different areas of mathematics, with most developing their

understanding well. They solve problems appropriately and apply useful strategies to carry out mental calculations and check their work. Staff have been successful in developing a positive culture of reading that helps most pupils to become competent readers. However, many pupils' writing skills are underdeveloped. Older pupils still make basic errors and their letter formation is often poor. Very few pupils write independently at length or with suitable depth.

In many cases, teaching provides an appropriate level of support and challenge for pupils' learning. However, in a few classes, it does not meet pupils' needs well enough. On occasions, staff tend to direct younger pupils' learning too much, and this limits the opportunities for them to learn independently. In older classes, where pupils do not have secure literacy skills, or where tasks are not sufficiently challenging, a few pupils lose focus and make limited progress.

Teachers provide useful feedback during lesson 'pit stops' that help to reinforce learning or address misconceptions. However, in writing activities, feedback to individual pupils often focuses too narrowly. This limits the opportunity for them to make meaningful improvements to the quality of their work or to discuss their learning and next steps in depth.

The headteacher provides effective leadership and has high expectations for pupils' learning and well-being. Leaders, including governors, have successfully established a happy and calm school community, based on a respectful team ethos. The school runs efficiently and communication is a strength. This contributes strongly to its robust safeguarding practices. During the past few years, parental engagement in school life has increased substantially.

Cameo: Building parental engagement in school life

The headteacher places great importance on staff communicating and working with parents and carers, as partners in their children's education. A few years ago, parental engagement with the school was limited so leaders adapted their approach, developing a programme of social events and fun activities that pupils and parents could enjoy together. For example, on 'Come and Do' curriculum days, parents and pupils learn circus skills together as part of the school's 'This is me' topic. Staff ensure that the school is a welcoming space and this helps to develop positive relationships within the school community. Most parents now feel comfortable to take part in social and learning experiences in the school and nearly all attend meetings to discuss their children's learning and progress.

A positive culture of continuous improvement and reflection is developing well in the school. By taking part in purposeful self-evaluation activities, leaders and staff have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, at times, monitoring processes do not focus well enough on identifying whether the actions the school has taken have had a positive impact on developing the quality of teaching or pupils' skills.

The school's strategic planning takes good account of national priorities, such as developing pupils' Welsh language skills. Leaders know that while younger pupils

develop suitable skills in listening and speaking, older pupils' ability to use the Welsh language is limited and they are working to address this. Leaders, staff and governors work together well to keep strategic decisions under review to ensure these are in pupils' best interests. For example, the school organised the learning week with a combination of longer and shorter days for pupils. It has realised that this arrangement has had a negative impact on the attendance of a minority of pupils, especially for those who are eligible for free school meals and pupils with additional learning needs. The attendance of pupils in these groups is notably lower than that of their peers.

Statutory compliance

Safeguarding arrangements

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

Healthy eating and drinking

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

School finances

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including use of the pupil development grant.

Health and safety (site security)

The school's arrangements for site security do not give any cause for concern.

Recommendations and next steps

We have made 3 recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

R1   Ensure that improvement processes and professional learning drive improvements to the quality of teaching and assessment to meet pupils' learning needs

R2   Improve pupils' writing skills

R3   Improve attendance, particularly for pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those with additional learning needs

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

Additional information

Teaching and learning

- Many pupils start school in the nursery with skills well below those expected for their age.
- During their time in school, many pupils, including those affected by socio-economic disadvantage and with additional learning needs (ALN), make at least suitable progress from their starting points. A few make good progress in many aspects of learning.
- Most pupils make strong progress in developing their social and communication skills. Through effective, nurturing provision in the nursery class, the youngest pupils settle well into daily routines. They listen well to adults and many soon enjoy talking to each other during their play. As they move through the school, most pupils develop their listening and speaking skills successfully. By Year 6, many engage enthusiastically in drama activities, discuss their learning activities confidently and a few share their opinions maturely about sensitive topics, such as the Holocaust.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They work collaboratively with their peers, are respectful of one another, and persevere when faced with difficulties. Many follow the whole-school expectations to present their work neatly, despite struggling with handwriting.
- When given the opportunity, they develop appropriate independent learning skills. For example, older pupils make choices about how they learn or present their work. However, in the younger classes, where there are opportunities for independent learning, these are often not at a sufficiently challenging level (i.e. Pupils complete low-level tasks, such as colouring in templates, copying sentences or completing word searches).
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides pupils with a wide range of worthwhile, authentic learning experiences.
- In all classes, pupils have timely opportunities to influence what they learn within their topics. This motivates and engages them. Most are enthusiastic about what they study and talk passionately about the learning activities they have taken part in.
- The curriculum reflects the cultural, linguistic and diverse nature of the local community and Wales successfully and is beginning to support pupils appropriately to explore the wider world. It offers pupils varied opportunities to study a range of religions and values through worthwhile lessons and assemblies.
- Work to ensure the curriculum builds systematically and progressively on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills is at a different stage of development for each area of learning and experience.
- There is strong provision for pupils' cultural development through the expressive arts. For example, during their 'We're off to see the wizard' topic,

pupils travel to London to watch a professional theatre show. Then, they collaborate with professional musicians and work alongside a local theatre company on lighting, designing costumes and writing scripts for their own production. This helps to develop pupils' creative skills successfully, their appreciation of the performing arts and raises their aspirations about possible future careers **(cameo)**

- Staff establish strong links with the local community to enhance pupils' learning experiences, for instance by giving pupils the opportunity to work with a local charity shop that helps those in need in their area. This has had a positive impact upon pupils' social and moral development, where they show understanding of, and empathy for, the struggles that some families face.

- The school's learning environments are stimulating and engaging. Nursery and reception pupils benefit from the many fun, exploratory opportunities staff provide that help them to develop their language, problem-solving and thinking skills. Staff make good use of the school's outdoor spaces as part of daily learning activities and, as a result, most pupils develop their physical and teamworking skills well.

- Older pupils develop their artistic skills effectively and have the freedom to explore and make decisions about how they wish to represent their ideas. A particularly powerful example is Year 6 pupils' artwork as part of Remembrance Day reflections. However, too often, staff over-direct artistic and creative activities for younger pupils.

- Provision for the systematic and progressive development of pupils' mathematical and reading skills is effective. Both have been a focus for improvement in the school in recent years.

- Most pupils make good progress in developing their understanding of the different areas of mathematics. In all year groups, many solve problems appropriately and older pupils develop sound strategies to carry out mental calculations and know how to check their work. However, in general, pupils' ability to apply their numeracy skills in their work across the curriculum is at an earlier stage of development.

- As a result of effective teaching in focused daily reading sessions, most pupils' reading skills develop well and they enjoy it. There is a positive culture of reading across the school.

- Many younger pupils have appropriate phonological knowledge and decode simple texts suitably. Nearly all pupils benefit from adults' effective, modelled reading of a class story or text and the opportunities to practise reading aloud regularly. As a result, most older pupils read fluently and expressively. Through purposeful class and group discussions, many infer meaning from texts successfully.

- In the few best examples, teachers help older pupils to develop an appreciation of language and to see connections between the techniques authors use to engage the reader, and those they are learning to use in their own writing.

- While there are valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about different genres of writing and to apply their literacy skills across all areas of learning, many pupils' writing skills are underdeveloped. In general, they do not make sufficient progress within lessons and over time. Many older pupils still make basic errors in spelling and punctuation, and their letter formation is often poor. Very few pupils write independently at length or with suitable depth.

- The school has identified the development of pupils' Welsh language skills as an improvement priority. Many younger pupils develop suitable skills in listening and speaking. They enjoy singing songs and responding to adults' questions. However, older pupils' knowledge and ability to use the language to engage in simple conversations is at an early stage.

- Most pupils use digital technology well to support or enhance their learning and have a good awareness of how to stay safe online. Many older pupils are confident in coding, producing presentations and videos, and carrying out research. However, their understanding and use of spreadsheets, graphs and databases is less well developed.

- In most classes, teaching moves at a good pace and pupils focus well. In nearly all classes, relationships between pupils and adults are strong and, in most cases, the calm environments are conducive to learning.

- Many staff use questioning effectively during lessons to support or extend pupils' learning. Staff are adept at asking pertinent questions as part of younger pupils' play to arouse their curiosity or extend their thinking.

- There is mostly an appropriate level of support and challenge for most learners. However, in a few classes, teachers direct pupils' learning too much and do not meet the individual needs of pupils, hindering their engagement and progress. In these instances, pupils either do not have the necessary literacy skills to be successful in their tasks, or activities do not challenge them well enough.

- In most classes, teachers provide useful feedback to the whole class during lesson 'pit stops' that help to reinforce learning or address pupils' misconceptions. Older pupils find this particularly helpful in mathematics and, as a result, make suitable corrections to their work.

- Most staff routinely share success criteria with pupils during lessons. In a few cases, this is effective in supporting pupils to self-assess, talk constructively about their learning and make improvements to their work.

- In writing activities, individual feedback to pupils is often focused only on correcting basic errors, such as spelling or presentation. This means pupils are not given enough opportunities to make meaningful improvements to the quality of their work or to discuss their learning and next steps in depth.

Care, support and well-being

- The school has clear systems for promoting good behaviour and for managing incidents which do not meet the school's expectations. As a result, the behaviour of most pupils is good, and they move around the school building in

a calm and orderly manner. Most pupils are welcoming, courteous and respectful to staff and visitors.

- Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and feel that staff will listen to and act on any concerns they may have.

- The school has a strong safeguarding culture which promotes the safety and well-being of pupils and staff successfully, including when working online. Leaders share information about the dangers of social media and how to keep children safe regularly with parents and families. They address any issues that affect pupil welfare sensitively and swiftly.

- Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of how to be healthy and make suitable choices with healthy eating and drinking.

- The school provides useful support for pupils' personal and physical development. For example, this enables older pupils to gain a suitable understanding of puberty and personal hygiene.

- The school has robust systems for monitoring pupil attendance and works closely with external partners to support families. However, the number of pupils persistently absent continues to be a concern for the school and is a current priority for improvement.

- Pupils eligible for free school meals and those with additional learning needs have a notably higher rate of absence compared with other pupils. The school recognises that the 'asymmetric week' (with a combination of longer and shorter days in school – i.e. closing the school to pupils on Friday afternoon) has had a negative impact on pupil attendance. Consequently, it is taking appropriate steps with support from the local authority to return to a normal school week from September 2024.

- The school's systems for supporting pupils with ALN is a strength.

- The ALN co-ordinator and class teachers ensure that there is swift identification of pupils with ALN and provision of effective tailored support to meet their individual needs.

- All pupils on the school's ALN register have detailed pupil profiles that focus clearly on important information about their individual needs and personal targets. This helps to ensure that most pupils with ALN make suitable or better progress from their starting points.

- The school's provision for pupils with social, emotional or mental health difficulties is strong. It has developed valuable dedicated support rooms and sensory areas, as safe spaces for pupils. Staff provide high-quality support, for example for pupils who have had difficult childhood experiences. This helps pupils to develop useful strategies to regulate and express their emotions.

- Pupils take on responsibility well through a range of leadership groups. The groups value opinions from other pupils and develop realistic action plans with targets that have a measurable impact on the school. For example, the school ambassadors work with the senior leadership team to ensure that the school is a clean and safe space, and the school council raises money for charity. Pupils feel that they are involved in whole-school decision-making and that leaders and staff value their opinions.

- The school provides effective support for pupils when they transition to a new class or to secondary school. For example, 'relationship weeks' in September each year are beneficial in helping pupils and staff to get to know each other and begin to develop mutual trust. Staff provide pupils with helpful transition support to secondary school, including extra bespoke visits for those pupils with additional needs.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to learn about the world of work as part of the 'When I grow up' curriculum topic. Parents and members of the community visit the school to talk about their jobs. Pupils learn about what is involved in different types of employment and develop aspirations of their own for their future lives.
- Pupils across the school take part in a good variety of extra-curricular activities that support their understanding of the importance of physical activity and the value the performing arts can bring to people's lives.

Leading and improving

- The headteacher and governors provide clear strategic direction for the development of the school. They have worked effectively with the community to develop an inclusive vision focused on raising aspirations for all pupils and developing them as resilient, lifelong learners.
- Leaders, staff and governors have a strong understanding of the needs of the pupils and the local community. They have successfully established a purposeful team ethos, based on professional respect, with a firm commitment to ensuring that economic disadvantage will not be a barrier to pupils achieving success.
- The headteacher provides effective leadership and has high expectations of all members of the school community. Staff appreciate leaders' support and care, and the steps they take to keep workload under review, ensuring that the school only adopts practices that add value to its work.
- The school's performance management arrangements to support and improve the work of all staff through well-structured professional discussion and review are robust. These align closely with the school's improvement priorities and focus well on the needs of individuals.
- When necessary, the headteacher addresses underperformance, ensuring there is sensitive, tailored support for individuals, with clear targets and timescales.
- Leaders have designed effective systems and processes that make good use of available technology. These support the efficient running of the school and ensure that communication between leaders and staff about important matters, such as pupil welfare, is timely. This contributes strongly to the school's robust culture of safeguarding.
- The headteacher places a strong focus on building leadership capacity across the school so staff understand their roles and responsibilities well. These reflect national priorities and the needs of the school community. Through

well-structured opportunities to work in teams and lead on priorities, such as improving provision to support pupils' emotional well-being, staff at all levels are beginning to have a positive influence on the school's work.

- Governors are highly committed to Deighton Primary and fulfil the role of critical friend well. They have a strong understanding of the school's context, its strengths and important areas for development, such as improving pupils' attendance and Welsh language skills. They play an active role in the life of the school, using their experience and expertise to support leaders and staff to improve provision for pupils. During more challenging times for the school community, where it has experienced tragedy and loss, they offer sensitive reassurance, prioritising the well-being of pupils, parents and staff.

- The school's partnership with families is outstanding. During the past few years, parental engagement with the school has increased substantially. Leaders ensure that the school is a welcoming space where parents feel comfortable to share in social and learning experiences with their children and this helps to develop positive relationships within the school community. Leaders value parents' views and act on their feedback **(Cameo)**.

- The school is developing a sound track record of improvement but recognises there is still much work to do to achieve its aims. Leaders have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, and this has helped them to improve important aspects of pupils' learning, such as reading and mathematics.

- A positive culture of continuous improvement and reflection is developing well. There are effective arrangements for ensuring that there is ongoing professional dialogue between leaders and staff about the school's improvement work and the professional learning offer that underpins this.

- Improvement planning takes appropriate account of national priorities, such as developing pupils' Welsh language skills, as well as school-specific priorities to improve the consistency of teaching and the usefulness of assessment processes.

- Leaders involve all staff and stakeholders in a range of purposeful self-evaluation activities as part of a continuous improvement cycle. During the past year, the headteacher has worked closely with staff and governors to make changes to the school's improvement processes so they take better account of the outcomes of self-evaluation and provide the flexibility to address emerging issues, through termly action planning.

- On occasions, however, review processes focus too heavily on aspects of compliance, rather than identifying precisely the impact the school's provision has on the development of pupils' skills. Currently, the school is trying to tackle too many priorities at the same time. As a result, staff are not able to focus well enough on addressing the aspects of pupils' learning most in need of improvement, such as their writing skills.

- There is clear whole-school 'roadmap' for professional learning that involves all staff in reflecting on and improving their skills and knowledge through a range of beneficial individual and collaborative activities. This includes

carrying out well-focused professional enquiries into areas of personal interest or aspects of practice they identify for improvement, linked to the school's priorities (e.g. reading). Increasingly, they reflect on the difference the development of their teaching or provision makes to pupils' learning, using evidence they have gathered about pupils' progress and attitudes to learning. However, there is not always a sufficient focus on professional learning at a whole-school level to drive forward needed improvements in the quality of teaching and key aspects of pupils' learning, such as writing.

- Leaders and governors deploy the school's resources appropriately to support pupils' learning and well-being. They share a common moral purpose to ensure equity for all pupils in the learning opportunities they receive. Governors monitor expenditure of the pupil development grant closely, for those pupils who are eligible, to ensure that they benefit from the additional learning support the school provides.

- In addition, leaders ensure that grant funding enriches pupils' lives and develops a broad range of skills, by providing them with learning experiences they might not otherwise have, such as flying to Scotland to take part in a residential visit.

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

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales

Appendix 1: Deighton Primary

Name of provider	Deighton Primary School
Local authority	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	234
Pupils of statutory school age	173
Number in nursery classes	37
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 23.7%)	46.9%
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 13.2%)	3.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	04/12/2023

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.

Appendix 2: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. *'most pupils…'* or *'very few pupils…'*. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%