



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

A report on
The Dell Primary School

**Welsh Street
Chepstow
Monmouthshire
NP16 5UQ**

Date of inspection: June 2022

by

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

About The Dell Primary School

Name of provider	The Dell Primary School
Local authority	Monmouthshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	384
Pupils of statutory school age	324
Number in nursery classes	
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 [SECTOR] is [xx]%)	6.8%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in [SECTOR] is [xx]%)	5.9%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	2.2%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	September 2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	02/07/2013
Start date of inspection	13/06/2022

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

The Dell Primary School is an inclusive school where the well-being of its pupils is a priority. Support for pupils' emotional well-being is highly effective and is a strength of the school. The acting headteacher and senior leaders collaborate well with all stakeholders and school partners. As a result, relationships at all levels are very strong.

Most pupils make steady overall progress as they move through the school. Nearly all pupils develop effective speaking and listening skills and use these well, for example to explain their ambitions for the future. However, pupils do not always receive the challenge or opportunity to use their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum as well as they could. Overall, pupils' Welsh language skills are not strong. Pupils build their musical, physical, and artistic skills well during their time in school. Regular opportunities to sing, dance and perform ensure that pupils' creativity develops well.

The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and provision for pupils' personal and social development is effective. Teachers provide a wide range of activities that engage the interest of nearly all pupils. Good use is made of the local environment such as when pupils study the River Wye and the area around Chepstow. The school's work in preparation for the implementation of a Curriculum for Wales is at an early stage in development.

There are effective arrangements to support vulnerable pupils and almost all make good progress. Governors are highly supportive of the school and help the school to manage and deploy its resources effectively. The acting headteacher and senior leaders have worked hard and effectively managed change following the pandemic and the absence of the substantive headteacher. Leaders undertake many useful activities to evaluate the quality of the school's work and its progress.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that pupils have opportunities to consistently apply their skills in literacy and numeracy at a high enough level across the curriculum
- R2 Improve pupils' Welsh language skills
- R3 Improve the quality and consistency of teaching across the school
- R4 Strengthen leaders' capacity to evaluate and improve the school particularly in relation to teaching, learning and national priorities

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Nearly all pupils start school with skills at or above those expected for their stage of development. Most pupils make at least steady progress as they move through the school. In a few classes and year groups, pupils' progress is accelerated. Pupils eligible for free school meals make progress at a pace similar to their peers. Pupils identified as having an additional learning needs often make good progress in their learning and towards their individual targets.

Across the school pupils develop their communication skills to a high level. The youngest pupils willingly share their ideas and listen carefully to adults and their classmates. For example, groups of pupils in Year 1 build on the ideas of each other as they work out how best to place the pipes and troughs to aid the flow of water. Older pupils listen to arguments and ideas presented by their peers. They often add their opinions building on the thoughts of others and display mature levels of thinking in response.

Most pupils enjoy listening to stories and discuss the different scenarios and events enthusiastically. From the time they start school, pupils learn quickly about sounds and how they go together to make words. Many use this knowledge well to sound-out new and unfamiliar words. However, as many younger pupils rely solely on this strategy, they often lose the fluency in their reading and on occasion this limits their understanding and enjoyment of the texts they are reading. Older pupils understand characterisation and how authors use techniques and features to capture and keep the reader's interest. Older and more able pupils use techniques such as skimming and scanning to find key information, for example when researching similarities and differences between three religions. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 6, most read fluently and comprehensively.

Most pupils in reception make very good progress in developing their early writing skills. When they start school, many use emergent writing and then progress to using single letters to represent words. By the end of the year, most can write an account of The Hungry Caterpillar, which is easily understood by the reader and demonstrates a good understanding of the conventions of writing and spelling. Many pupils build well on this good start and as they progress through the school they begin to write for a range of purposes. They use interesting and engaging word choices, show a good awareness of grammar and punctuation and understand the characteristics of different genres of writing. However, sometimes pupils do not develop their ideas, particularly in their extended writing, well enough and have too few opportunities to redraft and improve their writing.

Nearly all pupils, build their mathematical and numerical skills well as they move through the school. In line with their stage or development or age, pupils demonstrate high levels of competency when working with numbers and solving problems. Many have good thinking skills which helps them to solve single and multi-step problems. Pupils in Year 2, demonstrate a good understanding of standard measurements, such as time and weight, and talk confidently about how to partition two- and three-digit numbers. In Year 6, many pupils talk confidently about many aspects of

mathematics such as shape, measurement, and handling data. For example, pupils can solve simple algebraic calculations and find the area of a parallelogram and then draw regular and irregular shapes of double the area.

Although pupils develop key knowledge, skills and understanding during their focused teaching sessions, they do not apply these skills well enough or at a high enough level across the curriculum. This is particularly evident during many 'My Time' sessions where literacy and numeracy skills are not applied well enough. Across the school pupils lack confidence in using spoken Welsh and rely on a few simple words and phrases. Pupils' progress in developing their Welsh language skills is generally too slow.

Pupils build their musical, physical, and artistic skills well during their time in school. For example, Year 6 pupils develop their physical and technical skills when learning how to hurdle. They identify their stronger, dominant foot and practice their timing and accuracy to help improve their performance. Pupils in Year 2 look carefully at pictures of the Wye Bridge and under guidance produce detailed observational drawings which they then paint using water colours. Many pupils capture the tones of the stone bridge well and the different shades of the river flowing below.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils take great pride in their school and feel secure within its inclusive ethos. They are polite and treat their peers, staff, and visitors with respect. Nearly all pupils are very caring towards each other. They work and play together happily. Most pupils relish the many opportunities to undertake leadership responsibilities across the school including taking part in the Dell's Senedd. Older pupils also play an active part in the school's wellbeing team through their roles as playground ambassadors, wellbeing leads, and play leaders. Nearly all pupils understand the purpose of rules, rewards, and sanctions in school. They demonstrate a sense of justice and care for their local environment and use their voice positively to promote issues that they care about. For example, they write to their local MP to share their concerns about levels of pollution in The River Wye.

Across the school nearly all pupils feel safe. Through the numerous opportunities to discuss their feelings and emotions, and through daily well-being check-ins pupils feel emotionally supported and valued. They know exactly what to do if they need help or support with their emotional wellbeing. For example, younger pupils describe what to do if bullying occurs. Across the school, nearly all pupils value the support of the school wellbeing team. Most pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online. They know how to deal with password security, choose appropriate websites, and they understand how cyber bullying can impact their mental health. They show their understanding, in e-safety lessons when they produce information posters about ways to keep safe online.

Most pupils understand how to make healthy choices relating to diet and how to keep themselves physically healthy. For example, they bring fruit to school for their break time snack and enjoy the broad range of physical activities available at break and lunchtime.

Most pupils show confidence when undertaking new tasks or learning about a new concept. For example, older pupils confidently discuss the challenge of managing their own budget and saving money to buy a property. Across the school many pupils develop a sense of being ethical, such as through school Senedd led work where they make collections for the local foodbank. Older pupils display a good awareness of fairness, equality, and sustainability. They demonstrate this through activities on recycling and through discussions on gender balance. They also enjoy supporting charities such as a local Downs Syndrome charity. Many learners show great resilience in their work, and they strive to do their best. However, their understanding of what to do to improve the quality of their work is underdeveloped.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of the inspection.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum with a suitable range of learning experiences. Staff have begun to refine curriculum planning to include beneficial opportunities for the development of creative skills. For example, older pupils enjoy drama sessions where they empathise with and act out different characters' feelings and emotions. The school provision for pupils' personal and social education is effective. Planned lessons ensure that pupils have a high level of understanding of their physical and mental health. However, whilst planning is beginning to take account of the four purposes of learning and areas of learning and experience, the school's work towards The Curriculum for Wales is still at an early stage of development.

Following the Pandemic, the school has begun to re-establish extra-curricular activities and to invite visitors to the school to enhance the curriculum. These provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their creative and physical skills. For example, many pupils enjoy attending the school drama club where they develop confidence and collaborate with each other well. The school grounds further enhance curriculum provision for games, physical education, and the development of pupils' creative skills and nearly all pupils benefit from specialist sports coaching. This ensures that they develop their physical skills well for example when learning about athletics. Provision for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is generally appropriate. For example, there are regular opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills through daily guided reading and phonics sessions. Teachers plan regular opportunities for pupils to apply their skills across the curriculum during the school's daily 'My Time' sessions but these sessions do not always provide a high enough level of challenge for pupils and as a result they do not use their skills as well as they could often enough.

Across the school, all staff have strong working relationships with pupils. This creates a warm and supportive learning environment for all pupils. Staff use praise effectively to celebrate pupils' efforts and achievements, and they have high expectations of pupils' behaviour in class. This supports pupils to focus and sustain concentration during lessons. Overall, teachers provide a broad range of activities that engage the interest of nearly all pupils. These activities relate to pupils' everyday lives and

experiences outside of school. For example, younger learners enjoy making working lighthouses and challenge their thinking about the purpose of lighthouses on the River Severn behind the school.

Many teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to self-assess and to reflect on their progress across a series of lessons. They share success criteria with pupils effectively and refer to these appropriately during lessons. However, the quality of teachers' written, and verbal feedback is variable and, as a result, many pupils do not know what they need to do improve the quality of their work. Useful termly updates along with informative annual reports provide parents with valuable information about their child's learning and progress.

The school ensures that pupils have beneficial opportunities to learn about their local area and Welsh culture. These include a Welsh heritage and culture week and opportunities to discuss environmental issues about the River Wye. Nearly all pupils enjoy taking part in the local art competition in Chepstow and many older pupils benefit from their involvement in The Dragon's Den enterprise initiative with the Chepstow cluster of schools. All teachers plan and deliver regular lessons to support pupils' Welsh language development. Many staff use basic Welsh appropriately in the classroom, for example to give instructions to their pupils. However, the provision does not support pupils to develop their Welsh language skills well enough over time.

Care, support and guidance

The school knows its pupils, families, and the local community very well. Leaders and staff place a high priority on supporting pupils' mental health and emotional well-being. Support for pupils' emotional well-being is highly effective and is a strength of the school. For example, the school's pastoral lead works with pupils and families to deliver specific, identified support. This ensures that all pupils including those who are vulnerable have positive emotional health. Parents and pupils value this support, and pupils readily talk about how various well-being techniques help them to stay calm and to regulate their emotions in stressful situations. The school effectively supports its young carers and their families. Staff provide emotional and practical support, liaising with relevant outside agencies when needed.

The school has an inclusive ethos, and offers effective provision for pupils with additional learning needs. Robust systems are in place for identification of need and to ensure that appropriate targets are set. Intervention strategies are regularly monitored and adjusted accordingly. This ensures that support is tailored to the needs of the individual. The school closely monitors the progress of groups of learners, for example those who are in receipt of free school meals. As a result, almost all vulnerable pupils make good progress from their starting points.

Nearly all pupils have good opportunities to contribute to the school's work through a wide range of pupil voice groups. For example, the school council works to improve the local environment through its initiative to plant trees.

Teachers effectively promote the school's eight behaviours such as trust, happiness, respect, and politeness. As a result, nearly all pupils embody them well. However, provision to support pupils to develop their capacity to improve their own learning is

less well developed. Nearly all pupils understand what bullying is and have a clear understanding of the support available to them.

The school delivers daily acts of collective worship that explore human rights and make a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Through its partnership with a school in Malawi and other curriculum work, many pupils have developed an understanding of diversity. The school celebrates its own Welsh culture through appropriate curriculum work with its visits to the local castle and bridge. Pupils are aware of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that school council led assemblies reinforce well. The school supports a flexible uniform policy that is not gender biased.

The school encourages pupils to make healthy food choices and undertake activities to keep themselves healthy. For example, many pupils enjoy using the outdoor play equipment at playtime. The school is beginning to re-establish extracurricular activities following the pandemic. For example, the school's drama club is well attended and is effective in developing pupils' ability to express themselves imaginatively and with confidence.

The school monitors pupils' attendance closely. It works well with external partners such as the Educational Welfare Officer to engage with pupils and their families to support good rates of attendance. This is robustly monitored.

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

Leadership and management

In the absence of the substantive headteacher, senior leaders continue to engage with a wide range of stakeholders to communicate the school's vision. They are instrumental in creating and maintaining a very positive ethos across the school community. Relationships at all levels are very strong. Parents and carers appreciate how approachable leaders are and lines of communication are effective. This ensures that parents can raise any issues that may affect their child's learning and well-being. The school's leadership team and well-being lead provide exceptional support to all pupils and families including those who are more vulnerable.

Leaders work suitably to gather useful information from across the school to identify strengths and areas for development. They involve pupils, parents, staff and governors in evaluating the quality of provision effectively. However, leaders do not always focus well enough on the areas most in need of improvement, such as securing consistently good teaching or on addressing national priorities.

Governors are highly supportive of the school. They have a sound understanding of its strengths and know what the school is currently working on to improve. They help the school to manage and deploy its resources effectively. For example, they influence the school's use of the pupil development grant to ensure that it brings about improvement in pupils' emotional well-being, by funding a member of staff to provide emotional literacy learning support. Governors ensure that there are appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. There are suitable performance management procedures in place.

The acting headteacher and senior leaders collaborate well with other schools to further their professional development. They ensure that all staff receive appropriate training linked to local priorities and are beginning to share best practice across the school. For example, the well-being lead regularly provides beneficial training that helps to upskill the whole team. The school is a partner school with a local university supporting the development of student teachers and teachers who are newly qualified. Leaders provide appropriate mentoring, training, and feedback to support these individuals. However, recent challenges following the pandemic and changes in the leadership structure mean that senior leaders receive insufficient leadership training to enable them to develop their own skills and knowledge.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carers 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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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