



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

A report on

Herbert Thompson Primary

Plymouth Wood Road

Ely

Cardiff

CF5 4XD

Date of inspection: October 2022

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Herbert Thompson Primary

Name of provider	Herbert Thompson Primary
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	511
Pupils of statutory school age	375
Number in nursery classes	80
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 21.3%)	60.4%
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 22.2%)	37.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	2.7%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	13.1%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	10/03/2014
Start date of inspection	24/10/2022

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

Herbert Thompson Primary School places high priority on pupil well-being and developing pupil aspirations for the future. The headteacher leads compassionately and is ably supported by the whole school team who provide a vast array of bespoke support to promote the success of every pupil. Teachers and leaders across the school place high priority on identifying individual pupil needs and they use this to carefully plan and provide support for all pupils including those with barriers to learning or with additional needs. There is a continuous focus on individual pupil improvement, which is highly impressive. This is a strength of the school. As a result, most pupils make strong progress in many areas of learning from their individual starting points.

Nearly all pupils show great pride in their school and enjoy undertaking roles of responsibility such as when older pupils act as “Learning Friends” to younger pupils. Across the school all pupils feel safe, valued, and emotionally well supported. They engage well with their learning and show high levels of perseverance when faced with challenges. The school welcomes learners from the local area and wider world and ensures that they develop a strong sense of belonging to the school community. When the youngest pupils join the school, they often need a lot of support to learn. The school meets their needs successfully so that, after a relatively short time, they enjoy learning and begin to make good progress in all aspects of their development.

The school provides a range of stimulating opportunities for pupils and families to learn and benefit from. The school’s edible garden motivates pupils to grow their own vegetables and the school’s pay as you go shop enables the whole community to benefit from fresh, reasonably priced produce. This effectively supports the school’s drive to reduce the impact of high costs of living on pupils and families.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the approach to teaching so that pupils can apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum / in real situations
- R2 Refine provision to enable pupils to exercise more independence in their learning
- R3 Continue to refine curriculum planning to ensure that pupils have suitably authentic opportunities to develop their learning

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 in relation to how leaders reduce the impact of poverty on pupil attainment, for dissemination on Estyn’s website.

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at Herbert Thompson Primary School, most pupils, including those who are eligible for free school meals and those with additional learning needs, make strong progress from their starting points in many areas of learning, particularly in developing their literacy and social and emotional skills. A few pupils with more complex emotional needs make sound progress as a result of targeted support.

Many pupils start school with lower-than-expected communication skills and relatively poor personal and social skills. Benefiting from the school's part-time nursery provision, they respond well to daily routines and make strong progress throughout these early years, particularly with their physical development.

As they move through the school, many pupils make strong progress with their speaking and listening skills. Nearly all pupils are enthusiastic to communicate with each other, teachers, and visitors. Younger pupils listen well, take turns, and gain the confidence to begin contributing successfully during lessons and a range of activities. By Year 3, pupils debate the 'pros and cons' of children working in coal mines during Victorian times. They listen attentively to the points raised by their peers and their passionate responses suitably develop the conversation. Older pupils are developing the ability to communicate with more assurance and for a variety of purposes.

Most pupils' reading skills improve well during their time in the school. From their low starting points on entry to the school, younger pupils make good progress with letters and sounds. By Year 4, pupils demonstrate good comprehension skills, and they can accurately extract information from texts. Older pupils reflect suitably on their reading, for example they consider whether an author's use of vocabulary and structure is persuasive and effectively communicates their meaning.

Most pupils' writing develops successfully during their time at the school and pupils apply these skills in other contexts through their varied topic work well. Younger pupils of all abilities write frequently and with increasing independence. As they get older, pupils develop appropriate sentence structures, including finger spacing, capitalisation and the use of basic punctuation. Pupils' handwriting also improves in clarity and pupils confidently attempt to spell unfamiliar words phonetically. Older pupils craft different forms of writing, for example stories, letters, or persuasive pieces and, in the best examples, this writing is fluid, atmospheric, and expressive. For example, in Year 6, pupils write about the fictional journeys that characters make towards the UK.

Throughout their time at the school the majority of pupils develop their mathematical and numeracy skills suitably, particularly the development of their basic number skills. A very few pupils demonstrate high levels of understanding for their age, for example when they explain that halving five sticks would require one to be cut in half. Older pupils successfully solve a set of equations with several unknown values. However, very few pupils can apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum and in real life situations.

Pupils throughout the school are confident users of digital technologies. They use these well to access games to support their literacy and numeracy skills. Older pupils demonstrate useful internet research skills, for example when building an anti-bullying website. In the best cases, they create websites with numerous pages and include imagery, videos, and text. However, overall pupils' digital skills are less well developed. For example, pupils in Year 6 are not aware that formulas can be used within spreadsheets to automate calculations and there are very few opportunities for pupils to try coding.

As pupils progress through the school, they develop their ability to think with greater complexity and solve problems appropriately. Younger pupils develop these skills as they hunt for warm spaces for animals to hibernate. The oldest pupils develop their ideas surrounding the benefits of wearing, or not wearing, a school uniform. Throughout the school, however, pupils do not consistently direct their own learning independently.

Many older pupils engage well with Welsh lessons. Following a regression in pupils' Welsh oracy skills during the pandemic, many pupils are beginning to re-establish their understanding of basic Welsh vocabulary. For example, when they use words and phrases to describe hobbies in a game of charades, they use Welsh words and phrases to describe the actions of others. However, whilst younger pupils have access to Welsh reading books they struggle with pronunciation and translation of basic words.

Many pupils across the school develop their creative and physical skills well. Younger pupils successfully combine the development of these skills such as when Year 1 pupils collect and decorate sticks when creating wands for Halloween. Many older pupils develop their understanding of timing in music and acquire basic skills across a variety of instruments. Most older pupils develop their performance and drama skills well such as in Year 5 when they work collaboratively in groups to act out an event.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils demonstrate high levels of well-being. They have a sound understanding of their school values and express these thoughtfully through the daily school mantra. Most pupils demonstrate high levels of respect for each other, their school, and their community. They understand that they are well cared for and show a caring attitude towards others, for example, older pupils enjoy their role as peer mentors, 'The Calmelyons' where they help and support other pupils during break times.

Across the school all pupils feel safe. Through the numerous opportunities to discuss their feelings and emotions and through support such as Dosrbarth Enfys pupils feel emotionally supported and valued. Nearly all pupils who are new to the school, settle well into the school community such as when they start in the nursery setting, where they quickly gain confidence through the warm welcome that they receive. Most pupils understand the importance of keeping themselves safe online. For example, they understand how to protect their passwords and keep their personal information safe.

Most pupils are secure in their understanding of their rights as a child, for example, Year 5 pupils talk about their right to be safe and demonstrate a good understanding of what to do if they are being bullied. Nearly all pupils show high levels of care and compassion for others. Across the school, most pupils enjoy their involvement in supporting various charities, for example when they continue to raise money in memory of a much-loved past pupil who passed away. They show great empathy for people experiencing difficulties, such as in Year 6 where pupils demonstrate high levels of compassion when they consider what it is like to be homeless.

Many pupils enjoy taking positions of responsibility, such as being a class councillor, a member of Criw Cymraeg or a Super Ambassador. A few pupils show impressive maturity in these roles. They develop their leadership skills confidently as they move through the school, for example, Year 6 pupils thrive in their role as 'Learning Friends' when supporting younger pupils with their learning.

Most pupils demonstrate a good understanding of what it means to be an ethically informed citizen. Their work has a positive impact on school life and on the wider community, such as when pupils in Year 4 talk about the need to reduce plastic pollution in the river Ely. Nearly all pupils understand the importance of regular exercise to be healthy. Most pupils like taking part in physical education and enjoy attending extracurricular sporting activities such as athletics, netball and football. Most pupils make healthy food choices. They enjoy tasting a wide variety of vegetables from the school edible garden.

Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and they engage well in all activities. They show high levels of perseverance when faced with challenges in their work. Many pupils co-operate well, and they communicate effectively when working together, displaying strong social skills as they move through the school. Many pupils reflect thoughtfully on their learning. They demonstrate understanding of their strengths and areas to improve and respond appropriately to teacher feedback on how to improve.

The majority of pupils are attending school more regularly this year compared to last year when the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact nationally on school attendance. Considerably fewer pupils, including those who are eligible for free school meals, are persistently absent this year.

Teaching and learning experiences

A strong feature of the school is the highly positive working relationship between staff and pupils. Learning support assistants have a very good understanding of their roles and work very effectively with teachers to provide high-quality support for pupils' learning and well-being. Staff have a thorough knowledge of pupils' needs and backgrounds. This contributes beneficially to the nurturing and inclusive ethos that permeates the school. Teachers encourage pupils to overcome hurdles skilfully and they manage behaviour effectively. As a result, most pupils develop their wellbeing and skills successfully ensuring that they make strong progress.

School leaders and teachers have worked diligently to develop a values-led approach to the curriculum. Through this work, the school has reflected on the effectiveness of its own curriculum and has improved aspects of its teaching, particularly literacy. Teachers have worked well together to begin structuring the curriculum so that it builds systematically and coherently on pupils' existing

knowledge, understanding and skills as they move through the school. However, there are limited opportunities within current plans for pupils to develop their learning in suitably authentic experiences.

Overall, the school's curriculum is broad and balanced. It supports most pupils to make progress in their literacy and digital skills and offers pupils a suitable range of interesting learning experiences that encourage them to explore and learn. However, the teaching of numeracy is less well developed, and pupils have limited opportunities to apply their skills in real life situations. Teachers enrich the curriculum suitably through a range of additional activities, including local trips, visits, and visitors which are highly valued by pupils. For example, following a visit to Big Pit, Year 3 pupils planned and took part in a debate for, and against, child labour.

Teachers plan appropriately to develop pupils' Welsh language skills as they move through the school. Most staff use basic Welsh suitably to give day-to-day instructions to their pupils which coupled with Welsh lessons ensures that most pupils are gaining the confidence to speak Welsh in school.

In most classes, teachers deliver lessons at an appropriate pace, they share the aim clearly and use a suitable range of interesting resources to engage pupils' interest. Most teachers provide pupils with useful oral feedback that helps them to know how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. They question pupils effectively, challenge them to extend their responses and check their understanding. However, in a minority of lessons, the teacher overly directs pupils' work, and this prevents them from developing their independent skills appropriately.

The school makes purposeful use of assessment procedures to track pupil progress as they move through the school. There are regular and very effective pupil progress meetings that include leaders, class teachers and the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) co-ordinator. All teachers provide suitable responses to pupils' work. They monitor pupils' learning effectively during lessons and support them with helpful verbal feedback that helps them to improve their work and to extend their learning.

Teachers make good use of outdoor spaces to support pupil learning. For instance, they use the school edible garden well and this motivates pupils to grow and eat their own vegetables. The outdoor provision for younger pupils provides a stimulating and enriching environment for learning. For example, the willow garden provides a backdrop for a wealth of rich and interesting activities which enables the youngest pupils to select their own resources, develop their independence and a wide range of skills. However, as pupils move through the school, they have limited opportunities to independently direct their own learning.

Teachers provide a valuable range of opportunities for pupils to learn about diversity, for instance in the context of black history month and when older pupils interview people from the Windrush generation about their journey from Trinidad. These experiences are meaningful and give pupils valuable opportunities to empathise and gain an understanding of the lives of others.

Teachers plan useful opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the careers and to develop aspirations. During 'Open your Eyes' week people from the world of work such as an artist or pilot visit the school to talk to pupils about what they do. The annual careers fayre for older pupils helps to raise their aspirations well.

Care, support and guidance

Staff place an extremely high priority on the well-being of pupils, and this has been a particular focus both during and since the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff know their pupils extremely well and they meet their well-being needs highly effectively. Programmes to develop and support social and emotional literacy are diverse, very well embedded and having considerable impact. Overall, this worthwhile focus on pupil well-being is a strength of the school.

The strong sense of belonging at Herbert Thompson Primary School extends well beyond the pupils, parents and carers and staff. Through charitable community outreach activities such as 'Herbie's Hut', a subsidised shop selling school grown vegetables and charitable donations of food, the school strives to be at the heart of the local community. By sharing some of its facilities with a team of health visitors, the school has built an effective informal partnership that benefits many of the school's youngest pupils through the early identification of developmental issues and strongly evidenced referrals to specialist services.

The school consistently promotes the six core values, building towards the school's mission to help pupils "Find your talents and let them grow, be the person you'd like to know." Pupils and parents understand these values well, such as when pupils receive a reward for demonstrating values clearly in action. Co-ordinated opportunities for older pupils to support younger pupils with their work in class further strengthen relationships and help to build trust between all members of the school.

The school has coherent policies and practices to promote positive pupil behaviour. Staff use effective de-escalation strategies and techniques both in class and within 'Dosbarth Enfys', a recent school initiative to help pupils self-regulate more consistently. The school provides a beneficial provision for pupil well-being known as 'Y Cwtch'. This is a warm, welcoming, and safe space for pupils to develop their emotional intelligence and to help them to build the resilience to work through any challenging circumstances they may face. Furthermore, pupils benefit from a bespoke and varied suite of interventions. The school implements these systematically, for example through the provision of play and music therapies or when spending time with an emotional support dog. Collectively, these highly effective strategies and provision, paired with caring and highly skilled staff, help pupils to regulate and return to their learning quickly.

The school harnesses the richness and diversity of the local community well to provide suitable learning experiences to actively promote an understanding of cultural differences. The school provides opportunity for pupils to celebrate Welsh heritage and culture suitably through a variety of activities, including studies of the locality, a jamboree, and a school trip to an Eisteddfod at a theme park abroad.

The school has extensive outdoor areas that support pupil well-being and learning well. Staff use these areas suitably to develop pupils' understanding of their environment and the importance of both a healthy body and a healthy mind.

The Additional Learning Needs coordinator offers effective oversight and tightly coordinates the work of all staff. There are robust systems in place to identify, monitor, and review the progress of pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). The clarity and detail of pupils' records is outstanding and ensures that all staff involved with supporting a pupil understand their role and meaningfully contribute towards

their development. The school provides tailored support, which enables many pupils, but particularly those with additional learning needs, to make good progress from their starting points

The school creates and maintains a safe environment for all pupils, including highly effective site security and access arrangements for the school's numerous visitors. There is an established and well understood system to report safeguarding concerns regarding pupils or adults, and the school makes timely referrals to outside agencies when appropriate. The school has rigorous processes to monitor attendance and have successfully implemented measures to improving attendance, particularly for those pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Consequently, leaders have successfully embedded a strong culture of safeguarding.

Leadership and management

The headteacher leads with high levels of care and compassion for pupils, parents, and staff. She engages well with all stakeholders to share the school's vision and ensures that relationships with parents and the community are strong. Lines of communication are successful and ensure that parents can raise any issues that may affect their child's learning and wellbeing. The school adapts its methods of communication appropriately to meet the needs of each family. For example, following the pandemic the school social media page is a useful tool to share information.

The school has a strong track record of securing pupil progress. Despite the impact of the pandemic and the low starting points of many pupils this continues to be a strength. This is due to the beneficial procedures that leaders use to collate individual pupil need and the high-quality discussions that they have, to remove barriers to learning. There is a persistent pursuit of success and improvement for all pupils including those eligible for free school meals by leaders throughout the school. Leaders provide good role models and promote the school core values well. They have high expectations of themselves, staff and pupils attending the school.

Leaders and governors take good account of national priorities. For example, they pay due regard to the need to reduce the impact of poverty on pupil attainment. The development of 'Herbie's Hut', a school pay-as-you-can shop, is part of senior leaders' drive to reduce costs for families. Leaders have an extensive knowledge of community, family, and pupil needs. This helps leaders at all levels to provide appropriate support and intervention. They monitor support and the changing needs of the community well.

Leaders promote a highly effective culture of safeguarding across the school community. There are comprehensive measures in place to ensure that all staff receive appropriate training, and this impacts positively on pupils' safety and well-being across the school. For example, improvement in the behaviour of pupils with high levels of need following the introduction of a whole school approach to well-being.

Governors are very supportive of the school, and they are kept well informed by senior leaders. They appreciate the high level of detail that leaders provide to inform them about pupil progress and school improvement. Whilst governors have an appropriate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development,

governor participation in self-evaluation activities has not yet resumed following the pandemic.

Governors have suitable oversight of the school's arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. The finance committee monitors the school's budget appropriately and ensures that expenditure links closely to improvement priorities.

Senior leaders carefully reflect on school initiatives designed to bring about school improvement. They are open and honest in their reflections and are unafraid to make changes to provision when needed. Leaders use self-evaluation processes well to highlight what is working effectively and to identify areas for improvement. For example, the recent improvements made in assessment following thorough self-evaluation, planning, and monitoring.

There is a strong culture of professional learning embedded across the school. Leaders strategically plan appropriate opportunities to develop staff knowledge and skills. This is suitably linked to whole school improvement priorities. For example, the recent upskilling of staff in oracy is helping leaders to ensure that this identified priority is improving. The school successfully shares its practice with newly qualified teachers across the region. Leaders also provide high quality support for individuals as part of the school's role as a clinical practice school with a local university.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher robustly manage the performance of teachers and staff. There are effective procedures in place that support whole school and individual staff development well. Senior leaders challenge any underperformance effectively through provision of appropriate support, clear targets for development and regular monitoring.

Leadership is well developed at all levels at Herbert Thompson Primary School. Teachers and support staff take part in appropriate national and regional training programmes, which improve their knowledge and understanding of appropriate styles of leadership. The school provides many useful opportunities to develop leadership across the school, such as the opportunity for middle leaders to shadow the deputy head when undertaking monitoring activities across the school.

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:

Publication 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