



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

A report on

Oldcastle Primary School

**South Street
Bridgend
CF31 3ED**

Date of inspection: October 2024

by

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

About Oldcastle Primary School

Name of provider	Oldcastle Primary School
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	431
Pupils of statutory school age	326
Number in nursery classes	56
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 22.9%)	10.9%
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 11.1%)	1.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	12.9%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/07/2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/06/2017
Start date of inspection	21/10/2024

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.

Summary

The headteacher at Oldcastle Primary School knows the school well and provides effective leadership. The dedicated staff support her ably, and together they work successfully as a team. The school is inclusive, welcoming, and a happy learning environment, with pupils' well-being at its heart.

Pupils enjoy attending school and are very proud to be part of its community. They feel safe at school and know whom to approach if they feel worried. The caring nature of the staff and the respect with which pupils treat each other, staff and visitors are strong features of the school. Most pupils behave well. They develop the confidence and skills to express themselves articulately and develop empathy and aspiration.

Pupils develop positive attitudes to reading and a broad range reading of skills, which they use successfully to support their learning. They enjoy the many opportunities to develop physically, to be expressive and creative. Overall, pupils develop good mathematical skills and knowledge, and they write purposefully in different contexts. However, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for them to develop their writing skills independently.

The school's curriculum provides pupils with beneficial opportunities to learn about their community and diversity. For example, older pupils learn about the Windrush era and compose raps on the theme of eliminating discrimination. Most pupils engage positively with the purposeful range of learning experiences provided and make good progress in their learning. This includes pupils affected by socio-economic disadvantage and those with additional learning needs (ALN). Teachers in the youngest classes plan effective use of the indoor and outdoor learning environment to enable pupils to investigate and practice their skills. However, in general, teachers across the school tend to over-direct pupils' learning.

The headteacher works diligently with staff and governors to plan school improvement. The school uses a range of appropriate monitoring and evaluation processes. However, improvement priorities do not always focus well enough on the most important areas of the school's work, for example aspects of teaching.

The school has established highly successful partnerships with parents through regular engagement activities, which supports the whole family.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Improve opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills and ensure that teaching consistently offers the right level of challenge
- R2 Sharpen self-evaluation and improvement processes so that they impact more positively on the quality of teaching and learning

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Oldcastle Primary School is a happy and caring environment, where staff and pupils show a high level of respect for each other. Staff provide pupils with comprehensive support and encouragement, which enables them to develop their confidence, self-esteem and positive attitudes towards school life. Pupils thoroughly enjoy attending school and are very proud to be a part of its community.

The headteacher provides strong, effective leadership and sets a positive ethos for the school's work. The school has a clear vision for the education and well-being of all pupils and implements this well. The headteacher is very supportive of the staff and thoughtfully considers how to balance their workload. This has created a strong team ethos and a clear sense of belonging in the school.

Throughout the school, pupils show kindness and empathy towards each other's needs. They feel safe in school and they know whom to talk to if they have a problem or concern. The staff have clear expectations for pupils' behaviour and, as a result, most pupils behaviour is consistently good.

Staff provide a curriculum that offers pupils suitable opportunities to learn about their community, local area, Wales and the wider world. During the school's annual careers week, pupils across the school meet visitors from the local community to discuss their chosen careers, which enables pupils to learn first-hand about the world of work. There are beneficial opportunities for pupils learn about the diverse nature of society well and this is helping them to develop a deep understanding of historical and moral issues. For example, they are able to discuss current day inequality and compare with the challenges faced by people from the Windrush era confidently. Overall, through a variety of planned activities, pupils are developing a sound understanding of different religions and beliefs and discuss these ably. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to worship collectively.

Teachers plan systematically for the progressive development of pupils' skills. Most pupils make suitable progress in developing their numeracy and digital skills, and are beginning to apply them suitably in other areas of learning. Most pupils write to a good standard and use a range of contexts for their writing. However, they have insufficient opportunities to extend their writing independently.

From a young age, pupils communicate clearly and, as they move through the school, they become mature and articulate speakers. They listen well to staff and each other in whole class situations or when talking in small groups. Pupils' oracy skills are a strength. Recently, teachers have refined the way they teach reading and this is beginning to impact on enhancing pupils' ability to read and understand a

variety of texts confidently. Pupils also apply their reading skills effectively to support their learning, for instance when researching about the scientist Stephen Hawking.

Staff provide a range of purposeful opportunities for the youngest pupils to learn through play. Pupils embrace this freedom of choice which enables them to develop purposeful skills without too much guidance from staff. Across the school, pupils demonstrate a mature attitude to learning and are eager to learn. Teachers plan work that fully interests and engages pupils. However, the level of challenge provided for pupils does not always support pupils to make the progress they could. In a few instances, teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve are too low. With the exception of the classes for the youngest pupils, opportunities for pupils to lead their own learning, such as deciding, what and how they would like to learn, are at an early stage. This means that they do not develop their independent skills as well as they could.

Teachers use questioning to promote pupils' thinking and learning suitably. When questioning is at its best, it challenges the oldest pupils to show their understanding of their learning, and enables them to express their views with confidence. Written feedback is beginning to involve pupils on how to improve their own and their peers' work.

Teachers use their support staff to support pupils' learning and well-being successfully. Teachers create an inclusive learning environment where all pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and pupils adversely affected by socio-economic disadvantage, participate positively. Most pupils make at least sound progress from their individual starting points.

The school works closely with partner schools and external agencies. In addition, it has extensive partnerships with a range of initial teacher education providers as a lead partner school that offers beneficial professional learning experiences for staff. Staff have developed productive relationships with parents and the school shares relevant information about the school's news and events in a timely manner. Staff and parents work well together to enhance pupils' learning and experiences. In addition, there are weekly workshops and drop-in sessions for parents and their children and those living in the local area to engage in school life.

Spotlight: Community Engagement

The school's response to the community's needs is highly effective and has a positive impact on learners' engagement in school. Staff offer numerous, valuable activities for pupils and parents that focus on important life skills. These include advice on how to manage finances, cooking healthily on a budget and sessions to that enable parents to support their child's development as a reader. The school also provides advice for those who find themselves in challenging circumstances. Parents value these opportunities and feel that they have a positive impact on their well-being and the well-being of their children.

Governors have a clear understanding of their role and offer a good balance of support and challenge to leaders. They contribute well to school life and to its place within the community. Governors bring a wealth of skills and experiences that support the school's areas for improvement, such as challenging pupils' progress in

reading. They work closely with the headteacher to manage school finances and resources carefully and ensure that all decisions support the school well.

The headteacher and senior leaders model and promote professional values effectively. They use a wide range of first-hand information purposefully to identify opportunities for improvement and ensure appropriate opportunities for professional learning to support them to achieve their goals. Staff engage with these well to improve aspects of their practice. For example, recently, teachers have adapted approaches to teaching reading and mathematics. These new approaches are beginning to prove beneficial for pupils. However, in a few instances, leaders do not focus their attention or resources sharply enough on bringing about improvements to important aspects of teaching, such as ensuring that the pupils receive the right level of challenge consistently.

Leaders and governors have successfully addressed a number of national priorities including ALN reform, promoting the development of the Welsh language and improving attendance. They make effective use of grant funding, including the pupil development grant.

The school values the opinions of pupils. Nearly all pupils show enthusiasm for taking on additional responsibilities such as becoming part of the pupil voice groups. They work closely alongside school leaders to bring about change. Recent improvements include raising the levels of pupils' attendance by creating a promotional video and driving a campaign to refine the school's re-cycling procedures.

Additional information

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix 1: 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%

Copies of the report

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

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

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

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