

**A report on**  
**Bishopston Comprehensive School**

**The Glebe  
Bishopston  
SA3 3JP**

**Date of inspection: May 2025**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh**

## About Bishopston Comprehensive School

Name of provider	Bishopston Comprehensive School
Local authority	City and County of Swansea
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	1118
Pupils of statutory school age	1118
Number in sixth form	Not applicable
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 Secondary is 21.1%)	5.5%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Secondary is 11.2%)	19.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	1.3%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	1.1%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2024
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	04/12/2017
Start date of inspection	13/05/2025

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](https://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

High quality teaching is a notable strength of Bishopston Comprehensive School, and this fosters strong pupil engagement, exemplary behaviour and consistent progress. Most pupils are enthusiastic learners and collaborate effectively with one another in a supportive manner to enhance their learning. They embrace the school ethos that it is 'cool to do well in school'.

A key strength is the collaborative development of a curriculum that successfully promotes literacy, numeracy, digital and wider skills. Intervention strategies support pupils with weaker skills effectively. Generally, pupils demonstrate mature verbal communication, apply an array of reading strategies well and produce extended written work for a range of audiences and purposes. Numeracy is well developed, with many pupils solving a range of problems that involve fractions, percentages and ratios successfully. Digital competency is strong, with pupils using technology to enhance their learning across the curriculum.

Creativity is nurtured in lessons and through varied, engaging activities, including festivals and inter-generational projects. This is a notable strength. The development of Welsh language skills is supported well during Welsh lessons but opportunities to use Welsh around the school are limited.

The school provides a broad, balanced curriculum, with strong pastoral support and an effectively planned and responsive personal and social education programme. Enrichment opportunities and community partnerships enhance learning and pupil well-being. Pupil leadership is a priority, with wide representation in decision-making roles.

Support for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is a notable strength, with effective identification, tailored teaching, and targeted interventions. The Specialist Teaching Facility (STF) offers a nurturing environment.

Pupil attendance has improved as a result of working alongside stakeholders. Despite this, attendance remains below pre-pandemic levels and needs further improvement.

Leaders are ambitious and inclusive and pupil and staff well-being are prioritised. The robust systems for self-evaluation, improvement planning and professional development ensure that there is a strong culture of collaboration and accountability. Governors provide effective support and challenge, and financial planning is well aligned with school priorities.

## Recommendations

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

- R1. Continue to improve attendance
- R2. Increase the use of the Welsh language outside of Welsh lessons

## 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 two case studies on its work in relation to the school's work to develop pupils' creativity across the curriculum and the effective co-ordination of the progressive development of skills, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

## Main findings

### Teaching and learning

#### Teaching

A notable feature of Bishopston Comprehensive School is the consistently high quality of teaching. This has a strong impact on pupils' progress, engagement and behaviour. In nearly all cases, teachers have secure subject knowledge and model language well, helping pupils to understand new vocabulary and develop subject-specific terminology. They foster positive and respectful relationships, creating an ethos where pupils feel confident to participate and are unafraid to make mistakes.

Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attentiveness. They begin lessons with useful starter activities to consolidate prior learning and provide appropriate success criteria to guide pupils' work. They prepare high quality materials that support learning well. These features contribute to the exceptionally positive attitudes that pupils show towards their work. Nearly all arrive punctually, ready to learn, and work conscientiously throughout lessons. They respond positively to teachers' expectations and engage well with tasks, showing persistence and maintaining concentration. Most pupils collaborate maturely with one another, supporting each other's learning effectively in pairs and groups.

In many cases, teachers plan their lessons carefully and offer pupils increasingly challenging activities that support the development of their subject knowledge and skills. They offer pupils clear explanations of concepts, adapting their teaching appropriately according to the progress that pupils make. As a result, pupils take pride in their work and respond positively to the encouragement and judicious praise that teachers offer.

Nearly all teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils' recall. Many use open-ended questioning skilfully to probe and extend pupils' thinking. They offer useful advice for improvement, giving pupils suitable opportunities to reflect on and redraft their work, for example through 'Bridging the Gap' assessments.

In the majority of lessons, teachers have particularly high expectations of pupils and deliver their lessons with verve. They plan their lessons meticulously to capture pupils' imagination, challenge their preconceptions and encourage them to think deeply.

In a few cases, pupils do not make as much progress as they are capable of due to shortcomings in teaching. In these lessons, the pace is too slow or too rapid or poor planning results in activities that are too low in challenge. In these instances, teachers do not adapt their teaching sufficiently to meet the different needs of pupils, and they do not

use enough open-ended questions to stimulate pupils' thinking and get them to elaborate on their answers.

## **Skills**

A particular strength is the way that staff work collaboratively to plan and deliver a curriculum that supports the progressive development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills. This is co-ordinated precisely across subjects so that there are many rich opportunities for pupils, including pupils with ALN and pupils in the STF, to develop their skills across the curriculum. Intervention strategies for pupils with weaker literacy and numeracy skills have a strong impact on their attainment.

## **Literacy**

Nearly all pupils listen well and respond maturely to the contributions of others. The consistent whole-school approach to the teaching of vocabulary is impactful in helping pupils to use a wide range of subject-specific terms in their verbal and written responses. Most pupils share their thoughts and ideas clearly, and a minority express themselves eloquently, expanding their answers and citing relevant examples to support the points they make in a sophisticated manner.

The school recognises clearly the importance of reading to boost pupils' attainment, support improvements to their well-being and to help them develop as well-rounded, ethical and informed individuals. Consequently, the development of a reading culture that celebrates the joys of reading has been prioritised by the school. This is supported by a well-resourced library, book clubs and reading recommendations shared via social media. Many pupils read for enjoyment, and use a wide range of reading strategies to support their learning. This includes using inference to recognise the foibles of characters in fiction and articulating succinct overviews of both literary and non-literary texts. Many pupils synthesise information from a range of challenging texts effectively. More able pupils analyse language, character and theme in an assured and mature way.

Many pupils have strong writing skills and write well for different purposes and audiences across the curriculum. They use a broad vocabulary and structure their work effectively. A minority write with confidence and flair to engage the reader successfully. A few pupils make regular spelling errors, particularly when spelling more complex words.

## **Numeracy**

In mathematics and relevant subjects across the curriculum, there is a wide range of worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills, although in a few instances, these opportunities do not offer a suitable level of challenge for all pupils. Most pupils have secure basic number skills. They use the four rules of number fluently. Many

have a firm grasp of part-whole relationships and successfully solve a range of problems that involve fractions, percentages and ratios. Around half of pupils have particularly well-developed numeracy skills. They calculate fluently with numbers expressed as surds and those expressed in standard form. They have advanced algebra skills and apply these effectively to solve a variety of problems such as direct and inverse proportion and calculating the input and output voltages and currents in transformers.

Many pupils have a good understanding of shapes and measures. They convert between different units fluently and can apply their understanding of compound measures such as speed and density to calculate different quantities, both with and without a calculator. Many pupils analyse data well, solve problems involving different averages and plot graphs accurately.

## **Digital**

Nearly all pupils use appropriate digital skills and use spreadsheets effectively to calculate a range of functions. In general, pupils show an awareness of how to stay safe online and the potential impact on personal well-being of digital platforms. Most use suitable digital resources to solve problems and research, for example using a spreadsheet to cost ingredients and suitable websites to explore food. A minority of pupils use online learning platforms to support individual and collaborative learning.

## **Thinking skills**

In general, pupils have well developed thinking skills. The school's BISHH model (big picture, information, steps, hit it, hindsight) supports pupils to extend their thinking, scaffold their learning and understand their effectiveness as learners. For example, in maths, pupils use their understanding of how ratios can be displayed using bar models to solve a range of challenging problems.

## **Creative skills**

The provision and the leadership of creative skills is a notable strength. Leaders regularly evaluate the effectiveness of this provision, sharing good practice and ensuring that the creative habits of mind are integrated across the curriculum. Projects such as the Creative Schools initiative, the 'You Grow, We Grow' and health and well-being festivals offer pupils rich experiences that nurture creative expression and innovation. In addition, pupils benefit from authentic insights into the creative industries, including opportunities to explore professional roles such as exhibiting artwork publicly or understanding music copyright. Pupils enjoy engaging in podcasting opportunities to share inter-generational conversations focusing on heritage, sense of belonging and skills developed through life. As a result, pupils' creative skills are highly developed.



## **Physical skills**

Most pupils enjoy taking part in physical activity and develop their physical skills well, for example when improving their sprint start technique. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to develop their fine motor skills during a range of practical lessons.

## **Cymraeg**

Most pupils contribute positively during the Welsh lessons and many show a good standard of accuracy when pronouncing new vocabulary. Most translate basic words from Welsh to English accurately and many answer questions in Welsh using full sentences. They hold short conversations in Welsh in pairs or groups and listen attentively to their peers during whole class discussions. Many pupils' written Welsh is generally of a good standard.

## **Curriculum**

The school has a clear and well-established approach to curriculum design, informed by the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales. Leaders and staff reflect regularly on the curriculum model and adapt provision thoughtfully to ensure that it meets the needs and interests of pupils. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 offers a broad and balanced range of general and vocational courses.

Staff consistently promote the school's ethos, 'it's cool to do well in school', which contributes to the exceptionally positive attitudes to learning around the school. Leaders track pupil progress carefully and use this information well to identify individual needs and implement appropriate interventions.

The personal and social education (PSE) programme is a strong feature of the curriculum. Staff listen to pupils' views carefully in order to plan this curriculum, which draws productively on external expertise to support pupils' personal development. Pupils benefit from well-planned opportunities to explore themes such as diversity, identity and community, including the impact of LGBTQ+ figures and the history and culture of Wales. Across the curriculum, there are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of equality and inclusion. A strong sense of 'cynefin' is fostered through learning that connects pupils with their local area and heritage.

The school offers a wide range of enrichment activities which enhance pupils' learning and personal development. Staff offer helpful guidance and support during key transition points, and there are strong partnerships with local schools, colleges, and employers that help prepare pupils well for their next steps. The school makes particularly good use of community links to extend learning opportunities, such as through vocational and academic partnerships with local colleges and universities.

The school offers suitable opportunities for pupils to use Welsh, for example through the Urdd, Clwb Cymraeg, Criw Cymraeg and visits to Llangrannog. However, in general, pupils do not get enough opportunities to hear and use the language outside of their Welsh lessons.

### **Well-being, care, support and guidance**

Bishopston Comprehensive School is a nurturing and inclusive learning community with a strong ethos of mutual respect and high expectations. The school has successfully cultivated a strong sense of belonging where pupils feel safe, valued, and respected. The supportive relationships between staff and pupils are a notable strength.

Leaders have created an ethos where it is ‘cool to do well in school’, and this permeates the school’s work. It provides worthwhile support for pupils’ social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, using pupil voice to inform relevant themes in form time and assemblies. Form time activities and school assemblies promote equality and diversity well. For example, pupils work with staff and members of the community to create videos and podcasts sharing their experiences. Most pupils say that staff encourage them to respect others and feel that they are treated fairly.

#### **Spotlight: Pupil voice and leadership.**

Pupil voice is a valued and influential part of school life. There are extensive and purposeful opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles. A wide range of pupils undertake leadership roles, and this inclusivity strengthens the sense of belonging across the school community. The school Senedd is instrumental in improving key aspects of school life. In addition, pupils have taken a lead role in developing the ‘Swansea Pupil Voice Manifesto’, a collaborative city-wide initiative involving all secondary and special schools across Swansea. Through this work, pupils have presented to the local authority cabinet and helped to drive changes across the city, highlighting their ability to influence decision-making beyond the school itself.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities that support their academic, cultural and sporting development. These include a thriving school choir and numerous well-attended sports clubs. Such opportunities contribute positively to pupils’ confidence, well-being, and engagement with school life.

Support for pupils with ALN is a significant strength. Leaders have established robust systems and processes to best identify and meet the needs of pupils. Staff are updated regularly and can access important information to inform their planning and adapt their teaching to meet pupils’ needs within mainstream lessons. Pupils with more complex needs are supported through ‘personal target lessons’, where they work with support staff to help achieve their goals. There is a wide range of beneficial interventions that support

both academic and social development. For example, Year 9 and Year 10 pupils mentor and support younger pupils to improve their skills and develop an appreciation of reading for pleasure. ALN pupils follow a broad and inclusive curriculum and make good progress from their individual starting points.

The Specialist Teaching Facility (STF) provides a nurturing and empowering environment. Pupil voice is a strong feature, and pupils serve as prefects, sit on the school Senedd and represent the school in the Welsh Senedd. Staff know pupils well and provide high quality support. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and they meet their needs effectively.

The school has a well-understood behaviour policy. Sanctions and rewards are used consistently, and staff feel well supported by leaders in managing behaviour. Provision such as the pastoral support hub plays an important role in supporting pupils at risk of disengagement. Staff work with external agencies to ensure that pupils with more complex needs receive appropriate specialist support.

Attendance rates for all pupils, including those eligible for free school meals and those with ALN, have increased and the number of persistent absenteeism has been reduced. The school tracks attendance closely through effective systems, including first-day phone calls and weekly analysis of attendance data. Staff within the pastoral hub play a central role in supporting improved attendance by maintaining close contact with families and helping pupils overcome barriers to attendance. While there are many useful strategies to improve attendance that are having an impact, attendance remains below pre-pandemic levels.

There is a strong and shared culture of safeguarding across the school. Leaders, staff and governors receive appropriate training, and understand their responsibilities well. Safeguarding procedures are clear and well communicated. Designated Safeguarding Leads receive enhanced training and maintain effective links with external agencies. A designated safeguarding governor provides helpful scrutiny of the school's work in this area. Incidents of bullying are rare and dealt with swiftly and effectively.

The school works well with external partners such as Careers Wales to provide helpful guidance about next steps in education and training. Leaders encourage all pupils to have high expectations of what they can achieve and past pupils visit the school regularly to help raise aspirations.

### **Leading and improving**

The headteacher is a passionate and highly ambitious leader who places the well-being and progress of pupils at the heart of the school's work. She is well supported by a committed team of senior leaders whose roles and responsibilities are allocated equitably

to make best use of their individual strengths. Together they articulate the school's vision to empower all pupils to be lifelong learners and be the best that they can be. This vision has been shared successfully and is embraced by stakeholders.

Leaders consider the views of staff and ensure that their well-being is a high priority. The collaboration between leaders and staff at all levels is a notable feature and has led to a strong team ethos at the school. Leadership has had a positive impact on many key areas of the school's work such as the quality of teaching, the provision for the progressive development of skills and effective care, support and guidance.

Middle leaders have a secure understanding of their role. There are robust and supportive line management arrangements and a common agenda ensures that discussions focus closely on teaching and learning, pupils' well-being, and progress against priorities for improvement.

A particular strength of the school is the close alignment between self-evaluation, improvement planning, performance management and professional learning. A carefully planned quality assurance calendar identifies a suitable range of self-evaluation and improvement planning activities, including opportunities for pupils to share their views and influence the work of the school. Staff at all levels are involved in these activities. Leaders make effective use of data and triangulate this well with findings from first-hand evidence. In general, leaders evaluate the work of the school rigorously, although in a few instances middle leaders do not identify specific aspects of teaching that need improvement precisely enough. Leaders monitor progress against priorities carefully.

#### **Spotlight: The link between self-evaluation and professional learning.**

The school has effective systems for managing the performance of all staff. Professional development review objectives align closely with school priorities and the aspirations of individual members of staff. As part of this process, staff are provided with beneficial opportunities to discuss their professional learning requirements.

The professional learning programme is well planned to meet the needs of the school and individual members of staff as well as focusing closely on school priorities. This includes valuable opportunities for staff to share good practice. For example, senior leaders identify the expertise of the ALN team, including the STF staff, and they share their knowledge during professional learning opportunities with teaching staff to ensure that pupils with ALN are supported well in mainstream lessons.

The school is a lead partner for initial teacher education. This partnership provides beneficial opportunities for leaders to work together and develop professional learning for all staff.

The governing body shares the school's vision and governors are very supportive of the school and its role within the local community. Governors are knowledgeable and collaborate well with school leaders, providing suitable challenge and support. The business manager, headteacher and finance sub-committee monitor the financial situation of the school closely. Detailed financial reports are shared with the finance sub-committee and spending plans align well with school priorities. Planning for and the evaluation of the pupil development grant is robust.

Leaders focus well on addressing national priorities. The school's work to meet the requirements of the ALNET act and their work to help alleviate the effects of poverty on attainment are having a positive impact. As a result, pupils who are impacted by poverty and those who have ALN achieve well at the school.

There is regular communication with parents through a variety of channels such as text messages, e-mails and newsletters. Parents are provided with valuable opportunities to share their views on aspects of the school. Leaders respond well to parents' feedback.

### **Additional information**

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

The school's arrangements for site management 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 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 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 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, where appropriate
- visit a broad sample of lessons, 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  
(<http://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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