



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

A report on

**George Street Primary School
Wainfelin Road
Pontypool
Gwent
Torfaen
NP4 6BX**

Date of inspection: April 2019

by

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

About George Street Primary School

George Street Primary School is in Wainfelin, just outside the town of Pontypool in the county of Torfaen. There are 466 pupils on roll between the ages of 3 and 11, including 62 who attend the nursery on a part-time basis.

Thirty per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average (19%). Many pupils are of white British ethnicity and come from homes where English is the main language. Around 13% of pupils are from gypsy and traveller backgrounds. A very few pupils speak English as an additional language. A very few pupils speak Welsh at home.

The school identifies that around 19% of pupils have additional learning needs. This is below the national average (21%).

The school is currently a pioneer school and is working with the Welsh Government and other schools to take forward developments relating to professional learning.

The last inspection of the school was in February 2014. The headteacher took up his post in September 2018.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

Pupils' standards of wellbeing and their attitudes to learning are a strong feature of the school. Nearly all pupils behave very well in classes, during break times and at lunch times. Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make good progress in their learning as they move through the school. Pupils who are part of the gypsy traveller community make strong progress in their learning from their starting points.

Teachers plan worthwhile opportunities for pupils to use their speaking, reading and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in their topic and independent work. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum or to write at length often regularly enough.

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school that is shared by the whole school community. Members of the governing body understand their roles well and are very supportive of the school. The school has a strong learning culture and focuses well on developing the skills of all staff.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Excellent
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Raise the standards of pupils' writing
- R2 Provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R3 Improve the quality of teachers' feedback to pupils
- R4 Increase the attendance levels of pupils eligible for free school meals and those from the gypsy and traveller community

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 on its work in relation to its work to support vulnerable pupils, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Many pupils enter the school's nursery classes with literacy and numeracy skills below the level expected for pupils of their age. They make very good progress during their time in the nursery and, by the time they move to the reception classes, many pupils have skills that are at the appropriate level for their age. As they move through the school, most pupils make good progress. Most pupils with additional learning needs make good progress from their starting points. Pupils who are part of the gypsy traveller community make strong progress in their learning during their time at the school.

In the foundation phase and key stage 2, most pupils listen well to adults and to each other. Many pupils in the foundation phase speak confidently. For example, pupils in Year 1 discuss the best ingredients to use in a juice to soothe the class dragon's sore throat. In key stage 2, most pupils' speaking skills are strong. Year 6 pupils join in class discussions enthusiastically and make adventurous vocabulary choices, for example when retelling a scene from the *Tempest*. In Year 4, pupils provide clear explanations when talking about coastal erosion following a visit to the beach.

Most pupils throughout the school develop effective reading skills. By Year 2, most pupils know the sounds that letters make and use these effectively to help them to read new words. They show a good understanding of what they have read, for example by making sensible predictions about what might happen next in a story about Mog the cat. In key stage 2, many pupils find pleasure in reading. In Year 4, pupils enjoy reading stories and poems that are humorous such as those by Roald Dahl and David Walliams. They have good comprehension skills, for example, they re-read text to find their errors when what they have read does not make sense. Most pupils use research skills effectively, for example when they are finding out if elephants only live in Africa.

Pupils in the foundation phase use their phonic knowledge well in their writing. In Year 1, pupils write diary entries about how Farmer Duck feels about working on the farm. They use time connectives well to structure their writing and use familiar words and phrases from the story to add detail. They spell a few common words accurately and make plausible attempts to spell longer or more challenging words. In Year 5, pupils write for a range of purposes. For example, they write interesting reports comparing renewable and non-renewable energy sources. Many pupils in Year 6 write to a good standard in English lessons. They choose words and phrases carefully and use alliteration, similes and metaphors in their writing, for example 'Prospero trapped them in a cobweb of doom.' However, across the school, pupils do not write at length often enough and too many pupils have weak punctuation, handwriting and spelling skills.

Many pupils in the foundation phase understand and use simple Welsh words and phrases. They use these appropriately, for example to answer the class register and to sing Welsh songs and rhymes. In key stage 2, pupils prepare scripts in Welsh to support their spoken Welsh language. However, throughout the key stage, many pupils' independent Welsh speaking skills are underdeveloped. Many answer simple

questions about who they are and where they live but they do not have a secure knowledge and understanding of other familiar language patterns, for example about the weather or their feelings.

Most pupils in the foundation phase develop appropriate number skills. By Year 2, they tell the time using quarter to and past the hour and read the temperature on thermometers. More able pupils double and half three digit numbers and convert analogue to digital time accurately. They collect data using tally charts and present this information in bar graphs, for example the logos their class prefer for a community website. Pupils' mathematical skills develop suitably in their mathematics lessons as they move through key stage 2. In Year 6, most pupils have good number skills and use these effectively when solving problems. In a few instances, pupils use these skills in their work across the curriculum, for example to calculate the area of vegetable plots in gardens during the Second World War. However, across the school, pupils do not apply their numeracy skills often enough in their work across the curriculum.

Most pupils' ICT skills are good. In the reception class, pupils make pictograms of the mini-beasts that they find in the school grounds. Year 1 pupils program moving toys to follow instructions to move between the houses of the three little pigs. Many pupils in key stage 2 make good use of Hwb at school and at home. They use their ICT skills well to communicate information, for example, pupils in Year 5 produce multimedia presentations about what life was like in the past in the Blaenavon Iron Works and Big Pit. In Year 6, nearly all pupils broadcast music and speech via the school radio station to pupils in the school playground and to the wider community.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Pupils' standards of wellbeing and their attitudes to learning are a strong feature of the school. Nearly all pupils feel happy and safe in school and are confident that they can talk to adults and their friends if they are worried or upset. Most pupils understand well how to keep themselves safe, for example when arriving at school in the morning and working in the forest school area. Across the school, many pupils develop a good understanding of how to stay safe online. For example, in Year 2 pupils understand that they should not share their passwords.

Nearly all pupils behave very well in classes, during break times and at lunch times. They move around the school sensibly when changing activities, settle quickly in class and are ready to learn promptly. They are consistently polite and treat visitors, staff and each other with respect.

Most pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and display positive attitudes to their work. Many pupils in key stage 2 understand how to improve their work. More able pupils in Year 6 explain in detail how to re-draft a piece of writing about the community of Welsh people who migrated to Patagonia in the 19th century.

Most pupils sustain a high level of concentration when working alone and cooperate well with others when working in pairs and small groups. For example, Year 5 pupils work effectively together to plan a healthy meal for a family of four.

Nearly all pupils listen to the views of others and share their ideas readily, for example, when planning what they would like to do in the independent learning

areas. As a result, they feel a sense of ownership in their learning and work well during lessons. They persevere and concentrate well for extended periods when engaged in tasks and activities, for example when designing and making an attractive flower from waste materials in the woodwork area of the foundation phase. Throughout the school, most pupils have a good understanding of what they can do if they find their learning difficult including discussing their work with another pupil or an adult.

Most pupils appreciate the importance of eating healthily and drinking water regularly. Younger pupils use their understanding of healthy foods to choose and prepare healthy snacks at break time. Nearly all pupils understand the importance of exercise and take part in regular physical activities during physical education lessons and a variety of after school sporting activities. Many pupils in key stage 2 participate in a wide range of sporting competitions and enjoy significant success on a local and regional level. The young ambassadors for sport develop their leadership skills successfully. For example, they take responsibility for planning and delivering the Year 4 mini Olympics event for eight local schools and the annual whole school sports day.

Many pupils develop effective leadership skills in their work with pupil groups such as the school council and digital leaders. These leadership roles have a very positive influence on the school. Nearly all pupils understand the importance of these responsibilities and describe confidently the changes that they have made. For example, members of the Criw Cymraeg have recently introduced an initiative selling fruit at playtimes in Welsh to encourage more pupils to speak in Welsh to each other.

Most pupils demonstrate a secure awareness of their rights and responsibilities as local and global citizens. Most pupils have a good understanding of the needs of others and the challenges that people face in their lives. They know how their work to raise money for charity helps people who are less fortunate than they are.

Over time, pupils' attendance does not compare well with schools with similar numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals. However, the school's own attendance records for this year show that the attendance of pupils from vulnerable groups including those eligible for free school meals and from the gypsy traveller community is improving. Nearly all pupils arrive punctually to school.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Teachers and teaching assistants plan a wide range of learning experiences that interest and motivate pupils well. They have revised the curriculum in key stage 2 in line with national reform work and incorporated the principles of the foundation phase including planning for pupils to learn through practical activities and providing active learning experiences. Topics and themes provide good opportunities for pupils to learn in real life contexts and purposeful situations. Teachers involve pupils well in planning their own learning and this helps to ensure that pupils see their work as relevant and sustain interest in it. For example, a unit of work in the nursery class that started with a pupil finding a toy star in the garden developed into a topic about space and forces as pupils tried to find ways to return it to the sky. These exciting learning experiences ensure that most pupils throughout the school enjoy school and have an enthusiasm for learning.

Teachers plan worthwhile opportunities for pupils to use their speaking, reading and ICT skills in their topic and independent work. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum or to write at length. Teachers plan to develop pupils' Welsh language skills appropriately. They model the language regularly in lessons and around the school. However, the focus on reading and writing in Welsh limits opportunities to develop pupils' speaking skills. The school's provision for pupils to learn about life in Wales is good and this helps pupils to have a strong awareness of what it means to be Welsh. Teachers in key stage 2 provide good opportunities for pupils to take part in activities that help to develop their understanding of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. For example, pupils in Year 5 plan, design and build a suspension bridge.

Teachers in the foundation phase and key stage 2 have developed indoor and outdoor areas that provide a good range of learning experiences for pupils. For example, the school's forest school area provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to work with natural materials in the environment and to develop collaborative skills. The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to take part in school visits that support the curriculum effectively. For example, a visit to Raglan Castle helps pupils to understand what life was like in the past.

Staff across the school use a good range of teaching strategies, including opportunities for pupils to work as a whole class in small groups and pairs and as individual learners. In many instances, teachers adapt work well to meet the needs of pupils with different abilities and they link new learning well to what pupils already know. However, this is not consistent across all areas of learning and there are occasions where teachers plan for all pupils to complete the same activities. Where this happens, teachers do not provide sufficient challenge or support for all pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants question pupils well to challenge and extend their thinking. For example, in guided reading sessions, staff use questions skilfully to develop pupils' comprehension skills.

Nearly all teaching assistants work very effectively with groups and individual pupils and have a positive impact on the progress that pupils make. They provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop useful life skills, such as buying, preparing and cooking food to sell at break time.

Many teachers provide clear objectives for pupils' learning and helpful success criteria against which pupils assess their own learning. Many teachers and teaching assistants identify the next steps in learning for pupils. Pupils understand the purpose of this and, in the best instances, respond well to teachers' prompts and questions. However, the quality of teachers' feedback is not consistently effective across the school. There are instances where teachers have not drawn attention to misconceptions or errors in pupils' work and this hinders pupils' progress.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school has a clear ethos that focuses on the wellbeing of every child in the school community. Experienced, well-trained staff deliver a range of relevant programmes and use many highly effective initiatives to meet pupils' emotional health and wellbeing needs successfully. For example, a programme for vulnerable pupils provides bespoke, individual support and attention to improve their self-esteem

and to help them to feel valued. The patience, care and compassion shown to nearly all pupils in these groups is a very strong feature of the school.

Teachers use comprehensive assessment and tracking systems well to monitor the progress and wellbeing of all pupils effectively. This helps them to identify pupils who may require additional support or challenge in their work. Provision for pupils who require additional support with their learning is very successful. The additional learning needs co-ordinator supports teachers and support staff well to ensure high quality provision for pupils with additional needs. Staff provide a good range of interventions to support pupils' literacy and numeracy development. Nearly all pupils who take part in these interventions make good progress and many reach the levels of attainment expected for their age.

Arrangements to monitor the progress of pupils with additional learning needs are comprehensive. Regular meetings between teachers, parents and staff from outside agencies focus well on pupils' progress and their next steps. Individual education plans are effective and set out a good range of strategies to support pupils to improve their wellbeing and learning. All pupils with more complex needs have person centred profiles. This process is effective in ensuring that everyone involved in working with individual pupils understands their needs well

The use of enhanced transition plans to support vulnerable pupils is an exemplary aspect of the school's work. All pupils identified as needing individual support have a transition plan. These help pupils to understand the next steps for them using relevant and accessible strategies, for example sharing and discussing photographs of unfamiliar places. Staff ensure that pupils visit new classrooms or settings regularly until they are comfortable with the new environment. Teachers involve parents in this work to make sure that they are happy with the new arrangements for their children. Both pupils and parents meet new teachers and teaching assistants before any changes take place. These arrangements support pupils to move confidently between classes or phases in school, from the school to alternative provisions and from primary to secondary school. In addition, staff provide support for pupils as they complete interventions to ensure that they continue to make good progress. For example, pupils who have been receiving individual support to help develop their number skills may move on to a group mathematics intervention. As a result of this transition work, most pupils make good progress. They have a good understanding of what will happen next in their learning and are less worried at the times in their education when they face change.

School staff have productive relationships with parents and carers. There are valuable opportunities for parents to be involved in the life and work of the school. For example, weekly open sessions provide valuable opportunities for parents to visit school and work alongside their child. At the start of each term, parents identify the aspects of the school's work that would be most useful for them to learn about. Teachers then incorporate parents' suggestions into a programme for the term. These sessions help parents to understand better how their children learn and to find out about the strategies that staff use, for example to teach reading or number skills. This knowledge helps them to better support their children's learning at home. The school provides useful information to parents about their children's progress, for example through parents' evenings and written reports. The school's social media

feed and website is particularly effective in keeping parents and carers informed of the work of the school.

Staff monitor pupils' attendance levels very effectively through the school's attendance panel. The importance of regular attendance has a high profile in the school and a wide variety of initiatives to improve attendance levels appeal to pupils and parents, for example rewards for individuals and classes who attend well. Staff know the school community well and offer advice and guidance to specific families, for example those who have moved from other schools and have a long way to walk each day. Very recently, the school's work in this area has started to improve pupils' attendance levels, particularly of vulnerable groups of learners.

The school provides interesting opportunities to develop pupils' creative skills. For example, Year 3 pupils compose music linked to their feelings and record and share their work using an app. Year 6 pupils create effective landscapes inspired by the work of David Barnes, an artist living and working in North Wales. The school's involvement in a creative schools' project has led to the establishment of a recording studio that pupils use to broadcast news and music. The provision to develop pupils' physical skills is particularly strong and as a result, pupils have valuable opportunities to take part in a wide range of sport and games activities. The school has the appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

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

Leadership and management: Good

In the short time he has been in post, the headteacher has established a clear vision and a firm strategic direction for the development of the school. This vision is shared by the senior leadership team, all staff and governors. All staff have clear and well-defined roles that reflect the development needs of the school. They play a successful part in addressing the improvement priorities of the school and focus effectively on the outcomes and wellbeing of learners.

The headteacher, members of the senior leadership team and all staff take an active role in assessing the school's strengths and areas for development. They carry out clearly planned evaluation activities across the academic year. These focus well on pupil progress and enhancing provision for learners across the age and ability range. Leaders and staff ensure that they have a detailed and thorough range of first hand evidence from learning walks, lesson observation and book scrutiny, in order to make sound and accurate judgements about areas for development. Leaders use information from evaluation activities purposefully to plan the school's priorities for improvement. Priorities focus well on areas that will have a positive impact on pupils, for example by improving their writing skills and raising their levels of attendance. Curriculum leaders monitor and evaluate their areas of responsibility regularly and work coherently in teams to address agreed improvement priorities effectively. Senior leaders seek the views of parents and pupils regularly and take good account of these. For example, the school developed a drop off zone for parents who bring children to school by car in response to concerns raised by parents and pupils.

Members of the governing body understand their roles well and are very supportive of the school. Governors play an active role in the school's self-evaluation processes, for example taking part in learning walks and book scrutiny with members of the senior leadership team. Pupil leadership groups such as the school council and digital leaders meet with governors to provide information about their work. This deepens governors' understanding of the work of the school and the priorities for improvement. Their role as a critical friend of the school is developing well.

The school has a strong learning culture and focuses well on developing the skills of all staff. Nearly all staff take part in a wide and effective range of professional learning opportunities that link well to school priorities. For example, two members of staff are currently taking part in training to improve their Welsh skills and three are involved in training opportunities linked to curriculum reform. There are good opportunities for staff to visit and learn from other schools. For example, teachers recently visited an excellent nursery setting to observe practice. This enhances the provision at the school and helps to improve outcomes for pupils. The school has established very strong strategic partnerships with a wide range of agencies and contributes positively to the professional development of other staff locally. For instance, teachers from the school mentor newly qualified teachers from other local schools and higher level teaching assistants lead training for colleagues aspiring to that role. The school has well developed procedures to address the performance management of teachers and support staff. Development objectives link well to school priorities. In addition, they take good account of the professional standards for teaching and leadership, and the individual's specific responsibilities and interests.

The headteacher, the senior leadership team and the governing body monitor the school's finances effectively. Leaders make effective strategic decisions when allocating funds to develop the provision for pupils. A successful example is the investment in kitchen resources across the school. These have created valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their cooking skills and improved their understanding of healthy eating and their entrepreneurial skills. Leaders allocate the funding from the pupil development grant appropriately to support vulnerable learners. Leaders evaluate the impact of expenditure carefully by considering the difference it makes to provision for pupils across the age and ability range. The school and its surrounding areas provide a very good range of teaching and learning resources that support pupils' learning successfully.

Copies of the report

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

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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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