



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

A report on

**Woodlands Community Primary School
Thornhill Road
Upper Cwmbran
Cwmbran
Torfaen
NP44 5UA**

Date of inspection: September 2019

by

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

About Woodlands Community Primary School

Woodlands Primary School is in Upper Cwmbran in Torfaen. There are 342 pupils on roll. This includes 41 part-time pupils in the school's nursery class. The school organises pupils into a learning base for pupils with complex needs, and 11 classes, five mixed age and six single age. Health visitors are based in the school and there is an Integrated Children's Centre on site.

The three year average for pupils eligible for free school meals is around 28%. This figure is above the Welsh average of 18%. Nearly all pupils come from homes where English is the first language. The school has identified approximately 21% of pupils with special educational needs. This is equivalent to the Welsh national average of 21%.

The headteacher has been in post since April 2006. The school was last inspected in March 2014

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

At Woodlands Primary School, nearly all pupils make strong and in many cases very strong progress as they move through the school, often from very low starting-points on entry. Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in school and know what to do if worried or anxious. Pupils talk fondly about the staff and describe them as very caring and approachable. Working relationships are extremely nurturing and trusting.

Nearly all pupils show very good levels of resilience in their work and they are keen to progress in their learning. They work hard and complete learning tasks to a high standard. Teaching is a strength across the school and provision for pupils' wellbeing is outstanding.

Pupils receive a broad, balanced and exciting curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils very well. The school benefits from very strong and highly effective leadership. There is a clear strategic direction for developing the school and there has been a strong track record of improvement over recent years. Governors are effective in their roles and embrace new initiatives and change purposefully.

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

Recommendations

R1 Refine pupils' skills in spelling and grammar, to secure greater accuracy when writing. In particular, for pupils who are more able

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Excellent

Around half of pupils enter the school with literacy and numeracy skills below that expected for their age. As they move through the school, most pupils make strong progress and many make very strong progress in improving their literacy, numeracy, Welsh and Information and communication technology (ICT) skills from their starting points. Most pupils with special educational needs make at least good progress towards meeting their individual targets.

Throughout the school, nearly all pupils listen well and engage enthusiastically when talking with staff and other pupils. They discuss their work willingly and provide thoughtful responses to questions. In nursery, most pupils show confidence when talking to adults. In reception pupils' retell the story of the Three Little Pigs accurately, explaining dramatically what happened to the wolf when he fell down the chimney. In Year 2, many pupils talk sensibly in small groups, for example when discussing what questions to ask the giant from Jim and the Beanstalk. Nearly all pupils improve their speaking and listening skills rapidly across key stage 2. Older key stage 2 pupils speak with a high degree of confidence and expression and enjoy giving their opinions, for example when speaking about current events in the news.

Most pupils in the foundation phase develop a good phonic knowledge and use this very well to help them to read. In nursery, many pupils read their own names and begin to recognise the sounds that letters make. By Year 2, more able pupils read with good expression, for instance raising their voices when a character in a story shouts. Most pupils across key stage 2 read fluently and with very good understanding. By the end of Year 6, nearly all pupils are enthusiastic readers. They speak of a love of books and read a wide range of texts. Most make thoughtful inferences and deductions, for example by finding clues to explain how characters might be feeling.

As they move through the foundation phase, most pupils make very good progress in developing their writing skills. Nearly all pupils write purposefully in a broad range of different contexts. In Year 1, many use drawings to sequence popular stories and understand first, next, then and finally. By Year 2, many pupils use imaginative vocabulary to express their ideas, for example, when using a simile to describe a squirrel moving as 'quick as a flash'. Across key stage 2, most pupils build well on their time in foundation phase and make strong progress in improving their writing. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils produce high quality work in English lessons and across other subjects. They use rich and varied vocabulary to add interest and sparkle to their work like, murderous and venomous, showing a strong awareness of their audience. By Year 6, many pupils write at length and with great maturity and sensitivity. For example, they write emotionally, describing what it must feel like to be a Roman soldier's shield and creatively, explaining in great detail how to train your pet dragon. Many pupils spell accurately and use a wide range of punctuation effectively. However, a few pupils particularly those who are more able writers make simple spelling errors and do not use a full range of punctuation.

Across the school, most pupils are confident and highly competent mathematicians. Nearly all pupils develop a very good understanding of measure, number and shape, and use these well independently in different practical situations. For example, in the reception classes, pupils successfully create a tally chart of their favourite animals, to determine their most and least favourite. They represent their findings as bar graphs and interpret the data correctly. Older key stage 2 pupils calculate the height of Raglan Castle by measuring the height of a pupil. They use this information to estimate the number of pupils needed to reach the height of the tallest turret, then convert this into an accurate measurement.

Nearly all pupils have an extremely positive attitude to learning and speaking Welsh and most pupils' Welsh oracy skills are very strong. In nursery, most pupils understand and follow simple instructions. By Year 2, many pupils talk accurately about their likes and dislikes and begin to use simple words and phrases regularly. By the end key stage 2, most pupils have developed their speaking skills successfully, extending their vocabulary and conversation skills. Most older pupils read Welsh texts with understanding, for example, when reading Karabo, about a girl from Lesotho. Most write well in Welsh in different contexts, such as when comparing two adventure parks and deciding which one they will visit. Across the school, most pupils use Welsh confidently beyond Welsh lessons, for example at lunchtime or when playing outside.

Across the school, most pupils have exceptional ICT skills, which they use well to support their learning. For example, in nursery, many pupils are beginning to understand that messages can be shared over the internet. Year 1 pupils confidently use programmable toys and begin to use hyperlinks, take photographs and record their own voice on a simple app. Younger key stage 2 pupils email friends and include attachments. They understand how passwords can keep them safe. By the end of Year 6, nearly all pupils can programme robots to make complex manoeuvres and understand algorithms and how to solve problems within a program. They present information accurately using creative multimedia for different audiences, such as when discussing global warming.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in school and know what to do if worried or anxious. Pupils talk proudly about their school and describe it as very caring. Working relationships between pupils and staff are extremely nurturing and trusting.

Pupils' behaviour in classes and around the school is exemplary. They are polite and courteous to others and they enter lessons and assembly in a calm and orderly manner. All pupils demonstrate exceptional consideration for others, particularly those who may require extra support. This is an excellent feature of the school.

Across the school, pupils show they are developing very effectively as ethical, informed citizens. They raise funds for charities such as the End Polio Campaign and regularly sing at a residential home for the elderly as part of the school's links with the community.

In embracing the new curriculum, pupils have designed the mascot of 'Healthy Huw' to promote the school's work on developing healthy, confident individuals. Nearly all pupils have a very good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and drinking through the daily fruit tuck shop initiative and planting and caring for the fruit and vegetables grown in large planters. Key stage 2 pupils discuss sensibly how exercise is equally important in keeping healthy and feel that physical activity is a very positive feature in the school.

After school, around half of pupils take part in the good range of extra-curricular activities, including football, dance and hockey, which promote exercise and fitness. Sports Ambassadors enhance the range of physical opportunities on offer for key stage 2 pupils at breaktimes. They use their leadership skills extremely well to organise the 'Daily Mile' and 'Woodlands' Workout' stations.

Pupil leadership groups such as the school council, buddies and heddlu bach are highly effective and have a very strong impact on the daily life of the school. They influence policy making and support the development of pupils' physical and social skills well. For example, the eco council has written to the local authority to ask that they replace milk cartons with plastic recyclable bottles. The criw Cymraeg actively promote the use of the Welsh language and have had a positive impact on raising standards across the school. Digital leaders run highly effective parent workshops and support other pupils to develop ICT skills. They promote internet safety very effectively through the school. As a result, all pupils understand the need to stay safe, including online, and are aware of the need to keep their passwords private to protect themselves. All groups understand that they are representing the views of other pupils in the school community and take on this role rigorously and passionately. Pupils genuinely feel that their voice is heard, and their opinions valued by staff.

Working relationships between pupils and staff is an exceptional feature of the school's work and contributes extensively to its effective learning environment. All pupils express their opinion about their learning to influence what they learn. For example, they plan a range of cross-curricular activities linked to castles as part of their recent topic. This results in pupils being highly absorbed and interested in their work. Pupils are inquisitive and show imagination, participating eagerly in a wide range of interesting indoor and outdoor learning opportunities.

Nearly all pupils work well in pairs, groups and independently. For example, in Year 2, pupils research facts about polar bears and then present to their peers. Older pupils collaborate highly effectively in pairs, for instance when writing with empathy about a gladiator waiting to go into battle.

In key stage 2 most pupils are keen to discuss their work and understand what they need to do to improve. They reflect on their own learning with maturity and honesty and are keen to edit their work. They sustain concentration and show resilience when faced with challenges.

Pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly. Attendance has improved steadily over the last few years and compares well with that in similar schools.

Teaching and learning experiences: Excellent

Teachers make effective use of a variety of teaching methods and plan learning experiences that engage pupils' interests particularly well, for example in Year 6 when pupils investigate how quickly liquids move through materials. Teachers and learning support assistants work very effectively as a team and take advantage of every opportunity to enrich pupils' language. This contributes successfully towards most pupils expressing their ideas and opinions enthusiastically. Staff have high expectations of every child, and the quality of their inputs and questioning moves learning forward at a good pace. This ensures that nearly all pupils apply themselves fully to their tasks, concentrate for extended periods and show a high level of motivation and resilience. By forging a very effective working relationship with pupils, staff create an extremely supportive and stimulating learning environment. Staff in the school's learning base have a very secure knowledge and understanding of how best to support their pupils' diverse learning needs. The organisation of the class supports pupils' individual needs very successfully.

Most staff use effective questioning consistently to challenge and spark discussion. They check that pupils understand their work regularly. Teachers provide pupils with effective oral and written feedback and give all pupils regular opportunities for them to evaluate their work. This is effective in developing pupils' self-evaluation skills and when assessing the work of their peers.

Nearly all teachers have a strong knowledge of the ethos and principles of the foundation phase. They use a balance of focused tasks and independent learning activities well to support pupils' skill development. Nearly all foundation phase staff effectively plan for and use outdoor spaces as an extension of the learning environment. For example, Year 2 pupils follow instructions independently to make a magic potion using their number skills accurately.

Nearly all staff plan well to develop pupils' communication, numeracy and ICT skills. Most teachers review and build successfully on previous learning to support pupils to successfully apply their knowledge and skills in different contexts. Most teachers take very good account of the pupil's interests and suggestions to generate future learning opportunities. The school provides pupils with a wide range of real life learning experiences. For example, teachers in Year 4/5 worked closely with teachers from other schools to produce a bilingual opera for pupils to perform to parents. The school provides an extensive range of educational visits and visitors. These include a visitor to Year 2 discussing the cultures of a tribe in Burkina Faso and Year 6 racing maggots to observe them moving towards heat demonstrating how maggots were used in the Second World War to fight infections.

The school successfully ensures that all pupils learn about Welsh culture and heritage through a range of experiences such as visits to castles and reservoirs. Visitors include a Welsh clog dancer and musician who supported pupils to create musical raps about aspects of Welsh culture.

Home learning activities promote effectively pupils' creative, collaboration, research, design and making skills. Successful projects include designing and making an octopus that cleans the ocean of rubbish and a machine that translates pet noises.

Nearly all staff model the Welsh language to a very high standard and with a high degree of confidence. They provide excellent opportunities for nearly all pupils to develop their Welsh language skills through highly effective formal and informal teaching. For example, guided group reading using Welsh texts provides pupils with rich reading opportunities and everyday simple conversations improves the pupils speaking skills considerably. The school works highly creatively to teach pupils the importance of learning Welsh and the significance of bilingualism for their futures.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school provides all pupils with outstanding levels of care, support and guidance, within an inclusive and caring community. This is successfully led by a highly skilled staff wellbeing team.

The school's extensive range of nurture provision is highly effective and ensures that all pupils thrive at school. Staff use a range of strategies very well to support pupils' emotional development and to promote positive behaviour. Provision in the recently established learning base meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs particularly well.

All staff place a strong emphasis on 'Woodland's Incredible Values', such as respect kindness and tolerance, they promote them successfully through regular assemblies and class collective worship. These routines promote pupils' personal, spiritual and moral development successfully. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to learn about equality, harassment and diversity, for example through visits from members of the Windrush generation and when studying topics such as Black History Month. Pupils regularly engage in good citizenship programmes with local police officers and work effectively with members of the local faith community. For instance, the school's heddlu bach group identified safety issues in the local community through a survey. As a result they monitored school parking and raised the awareness of road safety to all parents and local residents.

Staff encourage pupils to be responsible citizens through fundraising activities such as Walk for William and supporting a local Dementia group. This resulted in the school being accredited with the Dementia Friendly School award.

The school has effective arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking and provides pupils with worthwhile opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe and live a healthy lifestyle. For example, many pupils engage in the 'Woodland's Workout', and visit the fruit tuck shop regularly.

The provision for pupils who require additional support is excellent. The school has comprehensive procedures to track and monitor pupils' progress. This has a significant impact on their standards and wellbeing. Teachers know their pupils needs extremely well and use information to identify and address any concerns early and arrange beneficial interventions. Highly skilled staff deliver a range of effective intervention programmes to improve pupils' literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Personalised learning programmes provide clear, specific and measurable targets to ensure that pupils receive purposeful support and as a result most pupils who require additional support make good progress.

The school has strong relationships with parents, for instance, through regular class exhibitions, parents discover what their children are learning in school. Parents regularly receive useful information about their children's progress. They also have opportunities to attend coffee mornings to air their views and 'family fun learning' sessions. These sessions enable parents to support the development of their child's literacy and numeracy skills effectively at home. The school attendance officer works skilfully with families to successfully improve pupils' attendance and punctuality.

Partnerships working with external agencies is exceptional. For example, the onsite Integrated Children's Centre and Flying Start health visitors ensure families and vulnerable children within the catchment, access very good support to meet their needs. This also results in a smooth start to nursery for nearly all pupils.

There are outstanding opportunities for pupils to play an active part in decision-making and leadership. For example, the eco club undertake litter and saving energy checks around the school, digital leaders have created an app to support pupils understanding of the four purposes. Pupil voice groups such as the school council and eco warriors present their projects, plans and updates effectively to the governing body. The school council take part in lesson observations, and their findings are then discussed with school leaders and fed back to the each class, identifying any areas for improvement if appropriate. These initiatives are well established, have a significant effect on pupils' positive attitudes, and have often influenced the school's priorities over time.

The extensive range of curriculum and extra-curricular activities that promote cultural understanding and the expressive arts for all ages is a notable feature of the school. For example, pupils take part in cooking and art activities at Crownbridge Special School, the dance troupe compete in the Torfaen Dance Festival and key stage 2 pupils have performed in The Mabinogion, a bilingual opera.

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

Leadership and management: Excellent

The headteacher and her senior management team have a clear vision for the school, which has a strong focus on ensuring that pupils achieve the best possible standards in the work and high levels of wellbeing. Senior leaders have high expectations of themselves and each other. They are very good role models for adults and pupils within the school.

Leadership at all levels across the school is highly effective. Nearly all staff have a lead role. For example, a teaching assistant leads the school's phonic work and the school's senior administration officer manages the induction of new mid-day supervisors. As a result, all staff feel valued and are proud of the positive contribution that they make to the life and work of the school. Teachers work very well together to ensure that there are common approaches to nearly all aspects of their work. For example, as a result of the consistent way that staff manage and support pupils' wellbeing, behaviour across the school is exemplary.

The school's collaborative work with other schools is exceptional. The headteacher has used her position as executive headteacher of two schools beneficially to develop staff leadership skills within the school. For example, the deputy headteacher worked as the associate headteacher taking over the day to day leadership at school. During this period, leaders sustained high quality practice and improved aspects of the school's work effectively. For example, they raised the standards of pupils' mathematical reasoning skills. The school works as a learning network school for Welsh across the region. Teachers from other schools value highly the good practice in teaching Welsh shared through professional development sessions and modelled classroom lessons. This focus on Welsh has improved the confidence of teachers at Woodlands to use the language as part of their day to day teaching. As a result, pupils also use the language naturally, for example using adjectives in both English and Welsh to describe a character from a story.

Governors support the school well. They have increased the visits that they make to school and as a result have improved their understanding of what the school does well and what needs to improve. This has helped them to be able to improve the quality of challenge that they provide to the school's leadership, in particular about the standards that pupils achieve.

The school has robust self-evaluation processes. Leaders gather a wide range of information about the school's work and use this well to plan priorities for improvement. They seek the views of a good range of stakeholders including pupils, parents and governors and listen and respond purposefully to what they say. For example, leaders improved opportunities for parents to visit classrooms to develop their understanding of teaching and learning strategies in response to suggestions from parents. Leaders and teachers are reflective practitioners and constantly strive to bring about improvements to the school's work in important areas. In recent years, there have been improvements in the levels of pupils' attendance and their Welsh reading skills.

Leaders have a clear plan for introducing the new curriculum for Wales, including the digital competence framework. Teachers have started to plan learning experiences for pupils that take account of the core purposes of the new curriculum for Wales and they provide pupils with opportunities to use a wide range of ICT skills as an integral part of their learning.

Leaders promote a positive culture of learning for both adults and pupils and provide extensive professional development opportunities for staff. For example, teachers recently completed research based enquiries into aspects of their classroom practice linked to their personal interests. These are purposeful and relevant to school improvement. They include looking at the impact of block play on pupils' standards and wellbeing and whether boys are more resilient than girls in lower key stage 2. Teachers share their findings from this work with colleagues effectively to improve practice across the school.

The school manages its finances efficiently and effectively. For example, it uses the pupil development grant well to support pupils who need additional social and emotional support. The school is very well maintained and has high quality learning resources that have a positive impact on pupils' learning, including a very good range of laptops and tablet computers. The school's grounds are extensive and provide

very highly effective opportunities for pupils to play and learn. For example, the wetlands area provides good opportunities for pupils to engage in creative activities such as building and camouflaging dens for dragons to hatch their eggs. Teachers have developed the foundation phase outdoor learning areas to a very high standard and these provide outstanding opportunities for pupils to learn independently.

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, 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' wellbeing, 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)

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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