

# All-Age

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## Schools

**29**

No. of schools 2024

**27**

No. of schools 2023

**23**

No. of schools 2022

## Pupils

**28,959**

All pupils

**6,064**

No. of pupils of primary age

**18,957**

No. of pupils of secondary age  
(compulsory education)

**2,031**

No. of pupils in sixth form

**18.5%**

eFSM (Aged 5-15)

**17.0%**

eFSM (All pupils)

**2.2%**

EAL A-C (Aged 5-15)

**31.7%**

Able to speak Welsh (Aged 5-15)

**8.6%**

Pupils with additional learning  
needs (Aged 5-15)

## Follow-up

No. in FU September 2023

SM: 1   SI: 0   ER: 1

No. removed 2023-2024

SM: 0   SI: 0   ER: 1

No. went into FU after core  
inspection 2023-2024

## Core inspections

No. of inspections: 5

Welsh-medium: 0

Bilingual: 3

English-medium: 2

Faith: 1

## Case studies

No. of case studies: 1

Names of schools with case  
studies: Ebbw Fawr Learning  
Community

SM: 0 SI: 0 ER: 3

Total in FU August 2024

SM: 1 SI: 0 ER: 3

## Engagement visits

No. of visits/calls: 0

Welsh-medium:

Bilingual:

English-medium:

Faith:

## Summary

During 2023-2024, all-age schools have continued to focus strongly on pupils' well-being and developing a culture of belonging and ethos of being one school. Strong working relationships between teachers and pupils were notable features in these schools. This ensured that most pupils were well supported, felt safe and developed positive attitudes towards their work. The quality of teaching varied mainly due to differing expectations and inconsistencies in the level of challenge provided. Schools are at different stages of development in delivering Curriculum for Wales, especially for pupils of secondary age. In all schools inspected, planning to develop pupils' skills progressively and systematically was not co-ordinated well enough. As a result, pupils did not build well enough on previous learning. In particular, schools did not provide enough worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills, higher order reading skills or digital skills as they enter the secondary phases. In general, leaders have implemented a cycle of appropriate activities to evaluate the school's work and identified suitable priorities for improvement. However, when evaluating teaching, leaders did not focus on the impact on pupils' progress well enough.

## Learning, teaching and learning experiences

Across the schools inspected in 2023-2024, many pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, made at least suitable progress over time. A few made strong progress. Pupils with additional learning needs generally made appropriate progress from their starting points.

Most teachers had positive working relationships with pupils that helped create a pleasant learning environment. In the few best cases, teachers planned and adapted work that met the needs of nearly all pupils. They engaged pupils in their learning through valuable experiences that related to their everyday lives and allowed them to apply their skills. Teachers provided interesting activities to gain pupils' curiosity and assist them to develop as independent learners. These teachers ensured an appropriate pace to learning and had high expectations.

In a minority of cases, where teaching was not effective enough, teachers did not consider the needs of all pupils suitably when planning, including for pupils with ALN. They did not have high enough expectations, nor did they provide suitable challenge. As a result, pupils did not make as much progress as they could have and became disengaged with their learning. Most pupils in sixth forms made sound progress and displayed extremely positive attitudes towards their learning.

When given the opportunity, most pupils applied their literacy, numeracy and digital skills appropriately in their work across the curriculum, particularly in the primary phases. In general, the development of pupils' oracy and numeracy skills was stronger than the development of their reading, writing and digital skills. However, in nearly all cases, schools did not plan for the progressive development of pupils' skills well enough.

A few schools successfully created a Welsh ethos that enabled pupils to make strong progress in their Welsh language skills. However, in general, schools did not provide enough authentic opportunities for pupils to apply their Welsh language speaking and listening skills.

Many schools offered pupils an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum and catered well for individual needs. They developed an appropriate vision for Curriculum for Wales that was well understood by most staff. This was delivered suitably throughout primary phases. In a minority of schools, delivery of Curriculum for Wales was less well developed in the secondary phase. As a result, pupils from Year 7 upwards, often from partner primary schools, do not benefit from sufficient continuity in their learning.

In a majority of schools, the curriculum included valuable opportunities to promote pupils' understanding of equality and diversity. This included opportunities for pupils to learn about discrimination and prejudice against Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities. However, a minority of schools offered too few opportunities for pupils to consider the experiences of these communities.

## **Care, support, guidance and well-being**

In each school inspected, well-being and care support and guidance have been strong.

They have developed a wide range of provision to support pupils in an inclusive and supportive environment. This has contributed to pupils feeling safe and having a positive attitude towards their learning. Most pupils across the schools were proud of belonging to their community and were respectful and polite to each other. Most pupils in the sixth form, where applicable, showed extremely positive and mature attitudes towards their work. Overall, most pupils behaved very well in lessons and around the school.

All the schools inspected promoted pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development suitably through a combination of activities. These included assemblies, reflection time, cultural events and health and well-being lessons.

## **Developing pupils as well-mannered and conscientious individuals at St Brigid's School**

An outstanding feature of St. Brigid's was the strong sense of morality and kindness, which permeated its work. The school encouraged pupils to consider their community through its charitable work, such as giving during 'reverse Advent' and sharing pre-owned uniform. In addition, the school participated at local church events, for example by providing 40 acts of kindness during the period of Lent. The school's strong values engendered a sense of belonging among pupils.

A minority of schools provided numerous opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles. Pupils at these schools benefited from being able to influence positively the work of the school. In general, schools provided suitable opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities including educational visits, clubs and performances.

## **Pupil leadership opportunities at Ebbw Fawr Learning Community**

There are extensive opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills throughout the school. In total, around 400 out of 1300 pupils carry leadership or ambassador roles. The groups are inclusive and diverse. Pupils take great pride in being an ambassador and are visible and active at break and lunchtimes. They have developed valuable leadership skills in representing and advising their peers. For example, the children's rights and Ebbw Fawr Way ambassadors have linked the school's core values to pupils' rights and ensured that every thought for a week focuses on one of the United Nations rights of a child.

All schools recognised the importance of promoting good attendance and communicated this well with parents and pupils. However, despite having improved significantly over the last year, in many schools, attendance at the time of the inspection remained lower than before the pandemic. \*

In a minority of schools, care, and support for all pupils, particularly the vulnerable and those with additional learning needs, was a notable strength. Staff understood the well-being needs of pupils and, as a result, most pupils felt well supported and safe. Schools have developed a positive safeguarding culture and arrangements. Staff understood their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. However, in a minority of schools, there were a few matters relating to health and safety that needed addressing.

## **Leadership and improvement**

In many schools, leaders continued to develop a culture of operating as all-age schools. As a result, pupils have benefited from being part of one school, for example when primary-aged pupils perform alongside their older peers in school productions. These leaders have successfully established a close-knit community and established productive relationships with parents and families. Headteachers in

these schools have set a clear vision, which has been communicated well with staff, pupils and parents. In a majority of cases, leaders have shown particular resilience and determination in developing their schools as learning organisations and overcoming hurdles as they become more established. However, in a minority of schools inspected, leaders have not been strategic enough to establish a clear vision or consider the future needs of the school.

Many leaders addressed national priorities appropriately. For example, leaders have successfully created a strong safeguarding culture across the school and ensured that pupils generally feel safe and supported. In a few schools, leaders work well strategically to mitigate the effect of poverty on pupil well-being and attainment. Read the case study supplied by [Ebbw Fawr Learning Community](#) regarding the impact of the whole-school approach to remove barriers to learning.

In the majority of schools, leaders' responsibilities were distributed equitably and were understood by staff. However, in a minority of schools, expectations and lines of accountability were not clear enough.

In general, leaders have introduced and established a suitable cycle of activities to evaluate the school's work and identified appropriate priorities for improvement. While leaders identified strengths and weaknesses in provision, in all schools, self-evaluation processes did not focus sharply enough on the impact of teaching on learning. In addition, improvement planning processes were not always clear or specific enough to ensure timely progress.

Many leaders have established a culture of professional learning that matches the needs of the school and focuses suitably on teaching and learning. Staff benefited from opportunities to undertake enquiry-based research and collaboration with colleagues, other schools and the all-age sector forum. In the strongest cases, this had a positive impact on pupils' learning, for example when teachers worked with partner schools to successfully implement a joint vision for the curriculum. Governors were very supportive of their schools. Overall, they had a sound understanding of the strengths and areas of improvement of their schools, were suitable critical friends and monitored progress against the school's improvement priorities appropriately. Overall, they managed budgets carefully and understood their statutory roles regarding safeguarding and promoting healthy eating and drinking. In a few cases, these were not always informed well enough to make long term strategic decisions to benefit pupils.

## **Follow-up**

One school in Estyn review from the last academic year was reviewed in a panel with the local authority and had made sufficient progress to be removed from follow-up. One all-age school has been in special measures since May 2022. It has been monitored each term where progress was found to be insufficient and it remains in special measures.

Five all-age schools were inspected this year. Two schools did not require follow-up but three recently established schools required Estyn review. The main reasons for this level of follow-up were that leaders did not have robust enough self-evaluation and improvement processes and that planning for the progressive development of pupils' skills was not co-ordinated well enough. Additional factors such as variable levels of accountability and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching also contributed to the decisions regarding follow-up.

## Overview of recommendations

In the 2023-2024 academic year, Estyn inspected five all age schools.

- Four providers were given a recommendation to improve the development of skills, and one to provide more opportunities to develop writing skills.
- Four providers were recommended to strengthen or refine their self-evaluation standards.
- Three providers had recommendations related to leadership.
- One provider had a recommendation to strengthen monitoring of and boost attendance levels.
- One provider had a recommendation for staff to implement behaviour strategies consistently.
- One provider was recommended to address shortcomings in teaching to improve pupils' learning and progress.
- One provider was given a recommendation to strengthen the effectiveness of planning for improvement.
- One provider was recommended to address safeguarding issues raised at inspection.

*\*All Wales Core data sets 2023-2024*