

A report on

Sofrydd C.P. School

Sofrydd Road

Sofrydd

Blaenau Gwent

NP11 5DW

Date of inspection: February 2025

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Sofrydd C.P. School

Name of provider	Sofrydd C.P. School
Local authority	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	148
Pupils of statutory school age	117
Number in nursery classes	22
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 22.9%)	32.8%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 11.1%)	16.2%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.7%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	7%
Date of headteacher appointment	26/04/2021

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/09/2016
Start date of inspection	03/02/2025

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

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Summary

Sofrydd is at the heart of the community that it serves. The headteacher has developed an inclusive culture in which all feel valued and able to succeed. Relationships are positive and based on mutual respect. Leaders ensure that pupils, irrespective of any barriers to learning, learn and thrive. Staff work together to ensure that they know the pupils well, enabling them to successfully provide the right care and support for each child. This helps most pupils be ready to learn, be respectful and feel happy and safe in school.

Leaders and staff have worked purposefully to design a bespoke curriculum that meets the needs and aspirations of pupils. The curriculum provides opportunity for pupils to celebrate their local heritage, while developing pupils' aspirations to engage in the wider world. Staff have appropriately high expectations for the pupils in their care. They plan meaningful activities that enhance pupils' learning experiences, wherever possible involving the pupils in deciding what and how they learn.

Teachers make good use of space both indoors and outdoors to scaffold and enrich pupils' learning. They have developed classrooms that are warm, inviting learning environments. They help pupils have a sense of belonging, they are proud of their school and speak with enthusiasm about the activities they are undertaking.

Leaders undertake regular and purposeful evaluation of teaching and learning. They provide staff with useful feedback to support them to keep improving, particularly in relation to strengthening pupils' core literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, most pupils read with confidence, write well and enjoy mathematics. However, opportunities for pupils to independently use these skills in other curriculum areas are underdeveloped.

Governors ably support the school through frequent visits to gain first hand evidence of the quality of teaching and learning. They regularly attend meetings, including useful sub-committees. Governors, alongside the headteacher, manage the school's finances well.

Recommendations

We have made one recommendation to help the school continue to improve:

- R1. Ensure that opportunities for pupils to independently apply their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Sofrydd is a welcoming, inclusive school that values pupils and staff and ensures that they can thrive. The headteacher and her leadership team have successfully developed a vision focused on high expectations for pupils' well-being, literacy, and numeracy skills. They have established a valuable culture of teamwork and commitment to meeting the needs of all pupils. The strong support and guidance they give enables most pupils to make good progress as they move through the school.

The majority of pupils enter the school with language, numeracy and social skills below those expected for their age. The school has suitable provision to meet the wide range of pupils' learning and well-being needs, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and in the Learning Resource Base (LRB). Leaders deploy teaching assistants appropriately to give sensitive support and guidance to help pupils. Staff ensure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and learning experiences.

Leaders and staff have worked effectively on developing a vision for the school's curriculum that is purposeful, authentic and reflects the context of the local community. There is a strong focus on fostering a sense of belonging, inspiring all pupils to fulfil their potential and contribute positively to both school and society.

Staff support the youngest pupils well to develop an early interest in books, helping them to quickly begin to identify simple letters and word combinations. Across the school, most pupils read well, and older pupils read with expression, using inference and deduction to support their wider learning. Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills. Most older pupils write using an appropriate range of fiction and non-fiction texts, including explanation texts and poems well. However, opportunities to write independently and at length across the curriculum are limited.

The strong teaching of mathematics helps to ensure that most pupils make effective progress. Many of the youngest pupils develop their initial counting skills by using acorns to develop an early understanding of saving. Most of the oldest pupils are confident in using a range of mathematical strategies. However, opportunities to apply their skills in a range of contexts are limited.

Overall, staff are effective Welsh language role models. In the younger classes, staff model the Welsh language purposefully and naturally. This helps to establish pupils' enthusiasm for using Welsh across the school. Many older pupils respond to a wide range of questions, and a few develop their sentences using connectives.

Staff provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities to develop their digital skills. As they move through the school, most pupils become confident and capable in their use of a range of digital devices. They apply their digital skills effectively to support and enhance their learning, understanding the need to be safe when online.

Over time pupils develop their physical skills well. Many pupils develop their creative and fine motor skills to produce a variety of meaningful artwork using a range of artists as stimulus. Nearly all younger pupils sing with enthusiasm and in the older classes most pupils compose and appraise their own compositions competently.

Teachers use a suitable range of strategies to enable pupils to assess their progress and that of their peers. They ensure that pupils know the purpose of their learning and how to be successful in their work. Across the school there is a consistent and effective approach to assessment for learning. Teachers value pupils' voices in what they wish to learn. This helps to ensure that learning is authentic, and pupils are interested and committed to their work.

Spotlight: Questioning for feedback

Teachers are highly effective in their use of questioning, identifying whether to support or extend pupils' learning as appropriate. The oral and written feedback provided by staff has a positive impact on pupils' progress, particularly when pupils have opportunities to respond. This helps pupils to confidently correct their work and make good progress in their learning.

The school helps pupils develop a worthwhile understanding of their future career options in the world of work. For example, pupils benefit from useful opportunities to take part in enterprise projects. In addition, pupils hear from visitors, such as doctors, radiologists and financial charities, which support pupils to begin to understand the relationship between education and their future job prospects well. These experiences help raise pupils' aspirations and motivate them in their work.

Leaders have worked alongside staff and, where appropriate pupils, to develop robust self-evaluation systems, allowing them to identify strengths and areas requiring improvement. Staff welcome the feedback, acting upon it to improve the quality of their teaching.

Leaders organise many opportunities for staff to develop professionally. They ensure that professional learning improves the quality of teaching, supports school improvement and equips staff to carry out their roles successfully. Leaders plan professional learning activities well, allowing flexibility to address any areas of concern. They use performance management processes effectively to improve staff, both in relation to the school's development priorities and personalised targets. In addition, where needed, leaders skilfully provide appropriate encouragement and targeted support to aid staff improvement.

Governors are committed to the school. The headteacher provides them with a range of useful information. They use this, as well as information gathered through first-hand experiences looking at teaching and learning, to provide the school with suitable challenge and support. Alongside the headteacher, governors manage the school and LRB's resources well.

Leaders have worked tirelessly for the school to be a beacon in the community that it serves. For example, they have developed beneficial links with the local community centre, allowing them to work together. In addition, they have developed useful links with the local cluster of schools, focusing most recently on giving opportunities for more able pupils to stretch themselves in their learning, for example making use of the secondary school's science laboratory and sports facilities.

Leaders, well supported by the whole staff team, including the school's office, have developed excellent relationships with parents. Parents are proud of the school, valuing the strong care and well-being that staff provide each day.

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/carers and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

Copies of the report

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

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

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

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