

Sector summary

Primary

2022-2023



Teaching and learning

What's going well

- A few schools have made strong progress with their implementation of Curriculum for Wales. Often, these schools have been on their journey to reform for some years and this means that teachers have a secure understanding of the principles behind the changes.
- In general, most pupils, including those with ALN, make good progress with the development of their skills and knowledge during their time in primary school.
- Pupils' oracy skills are increasingly strong in many schools. This is often a reflection of changes in pedagogy that provide more time for pupils to collaborate and discuss, as well as teachers planning more opportunities for pupils to practise their oracy skills to compensate for the negative impacts of the pandemic.
- In many schools, pupils have a good understanding of the features of different types of writing.
- As we noted last year, pupils demonstrate a wide range of effective digital skills, including the ability to write simple programs and control the movement of devices.

What needs to improve

- Progress in the development of pupils' Welsh language oracy skills in English-medium schools remains a concern and has been further hampered by the impact of the pandemic in recent years.
- A minority of schools are still at the early stage of implementing Curriculum for Wales. Many of these schools have adapted planning to focus on **what** pupils learn rather than **how** they learn and only a minority of schools plan effectively to ensure progression in pupils' skills and knowledge over time.
- Similarly to last year, in too many schools, pupils do not write at length frequently enough and make basic errors in grammar and punctuation that are not addressed well enough through teacher feedback.
- Too often, teachers plan independent activities for pupils that do not challenge them sufficiently and do not help them to progress with their learning. As a result, particularly with numeracy, pupils do not apply their skills in work across the curriculum at a high enough level.

Care, support and well-being

What's going well

- In most cases, pupils enjoy school, demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning and behave well.
- Schools have approached ALN reform with positivity and made good progress towards implementing the requirements of the ALN act.
- Since the pandemic, schools have a heightened awareness of the well-being needs of pupils and many have put in place additional measures to address anxiety and ensure that pupils can share any concerns or worries.
- In many schools, pupils have increasingly meaningful opportunities to contribute to the life and work of the school through pupil voice groups. In the best cases, leaders involve pupils purposefully in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning.

What needs to improve

- Rates of attendance remain below pre-pandemic levels and the attendance of pupils who are at risk from deprivation is a particular concern.
- Schools do not always provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to learn about the diverse nature of their communities, Wales and the wider world.

Leading and improving

What's going well

- In many cases, particularly where they have made good progress with curriculum reform, schools have strengthened their relationships with parents and the wider community.
- In a few schools, leaders carefully consider the context of their school and ensure that they adopt only those policies and procedures that are most relevant to the needs of its pupils.
- Many schools now co-operate well with other schools in their local cluster and further afield to share effective practice in teaching and learning and address the requirements of curriculum and ALN reform.
- In a majority of schools, leaders ensure that care is taken to consider the cost of the school day and the impact that this can have on all families.

What needs to improve

- Too often, self-evaluation and improvement processes lack rigour, do not focus on outcomes for pupils and do not identify key areas for improvement in the quality of teaching, particularly in the classes of the youngest pupils.
- In many cases, following the pandemic, governors have not returned to their usual routines of gathering first-hand evidence of the quality of the work of the school. This hinders their ability to challenge and support the school as they rely too heavily on the information provided to them by senior leaders.
- In a minority of cases, leaders do not ensure that professional learning to improve the Welsh skills of staff leads to improvements in the standards and progress achieved by pupils.

Overview of recommendations from inspections

219

Two-hundred and nineteen primary schools were inspected during 2022-2023

94

Ninety-four (43%) of the primary schools inspected received a recommendation related to improving the effectiveness of self-evaluation and school improvement activities. These often related to a need for leaders to focus their activities more closely on the impact on outcomes for pupils.

64

Sixty-four (29%) of the primary schools received a recommendation which related to improving opportunities for learners to develop their independence.

61

Recommendations relating to the quality and effectiveness of feedback were given to 61 (28%) of the primary schools.

60

Sixty (27%) of the primary schools had a recommendation to improve their curriculum to ensure the progressive and systematic development of pupils' skills.

46

At 46 (21%) of the primary schools, inspectors identified a need to improve the level of challenge provided during lessons and activities.

46

A further 46 (21%) of the primary schools received a recommendation which concerned improvements to literacy skills, with 37 (17%) receiving a recommendation related to numeracy skills.

51

Inspectors identified 51 (30%) of the 169 English-medium primary schools inspected as needing to improve the development of pupils' Welsh language skills, in particular spoken Welsh. Among the 50 Welsh-medium schools inspected, nine (18%) were left with a recommendation in this regard.

Reflective questions

Questions to help schools **reflect on how they support the development of pupils' Welsh oracy skills:**

How well do leaders understand the strengths and areas for improvement within the current provision?

- How strong are pupils' Welsh oracy skills and how do you know? What can pupils do well and what needs to improve?
 - How enthusiastic are pupils about the Welsh language? How can the school improve this?
 - How well does the school focus on the development of pupils' ability to speak and understand Welsh?
 - How effective are the school's arrangements to ensure that pupils build their skills progressively in lessons, learning activities and over time?
 - To what extent does the school use opportunities outside of specific Welsh language sessions to encourage pupils to apply and develop their skills?
 - How well does the school plan for the use of Welsh in a range of areas of learning? How well does the school ensure that the use of Welsh in other lessons builds on the skills pupils have previously developed and provides sufficient challenge?
 - How strong are the Welsh language skills of staff? Do staff show an enthusiasm and commitment towards teaching the language and understand the benefits of developing bilingualism?
 - How well does the school ensure effective professional learning for Welsh and make the most of any strengths amongst staff members to support others who are less confident?
 - How well do staff members understand effective pedagogy in Welsh language development?
 - How effectively do leaders set a positive tone around the use of the Welsh language? Do they demonstrate high expectations of staff and pupils?
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Effective practice

To read about individual providers that are working effectively in specific aspects of their work, visit our [effective practice summary page for 2022-2023](#)