



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

A report on

**Ysgol Maes Hyfryd Special School
Fifth Avenue
Flint
Flintshire
Flint
CH6 5QL**

Date of inspection: October 2018

by

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

About Ysgol Maes Hyfryd Special School

Ysgol Maes Hyfryd is a special school situated in Flint and maintained by Flintshire local authority. The school is co-located with Flint High School and shares a few of its facilities. There are a very few pupils placed at Elfed High School in Buckley but placements at this school will end in July 2019. The school provides education for pupils aged 11 to 19 years who have a statement of special educational needs.

Pupils at the school have a range of needs, including autistic spectrum disorders, speech, language and communication needs and moderate, severe and profound learning difficulties.

There are currently 102 pupils on roll, of whom 44% are eligible for free school meals. Nearly all pupils are from homes where English is the main spoken language.

The current headteacher was appointed in June 2013.

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

Over time, most pupils make strong progress in their learning in relation to their individual needs and abilities. Pupils are happy at school, enjoy their lessons and treat all staff with respect. The school provides a relevant and engaging curriculum and works effectively with outside agencies and other education providers to ensure that its pupils have enriching learning experiences.

Leaders, teachers and support staff place great importance on working with parents and the community in order to improve outcomes for their pupils. This is a particular strength of the school. The strong senior leadership team promotes a whole school ethos of collaboration where everyone is encouraged to make a contribution. Staff at all levels are proud of their pupils and share in the school's successes.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that self-evaluation outcomes are closely linked to priorities for improvement so that progress is monitored and evaluated effectively
- R2 Ensure that tracking and monitoring systems enable teachers and leaders to measure the progress of pupils over time
- R3 Improve the provision for Welsh language development
- R4 Evaluate the impact of current interventions and support programmes in order to prioritise those that are most effective

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 work with parents and the community to support pupils' wellbeing and independence, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Over time, most pupils make strong progress in their learning from their starting points and in relation to their individual needs and abilities. They make good progress in achieving the agreed learning targets identified in their individual education plans (IEP). However, a few pupils with complex needs do not engage well enough in their learning and, as a result, do not make enough progress.

Generally, the number and range of qualifications that pupils gain has increased over the last three years. By the time they leave school, all pupils gain at least one qualification. Pupils who are more able gain qualifications in a wide range of qualifications in courses that are well-matched to their needs and abilities. These include entry level qualifications in literacy, numeracy and personal development. Over the last three years, pupils leaving the school have all moved on to further education and/or specialist college provision.

It is not appropriate to compare the standards that pupils achieve at the school with national averages or to analyse trends in overall performance over time because of the wide range of pupils' special educational needs. There is no significant difference between the performance of all pupils and that of boys and girls, those pupils eligible for free school meals or those who are looked after by the local authority.

Over time, many pupils make suitable progress in developing as independent learners. For example, pupils with complex needs learn classroom routines and make smooth transitions between activities. They make choices such as what activities they want to do and what they want to eat. Many older pupils develop as resilient, confident learners and are able to stay on task for extended periods.

Older pupils learn important life skills that prepare them well for moving to college and living more independently. For example, they learn to use public transport safely. This includes understanding timetables, learning how to tell the time and knowing how to keep themselves safe in public. Nearly all pupils at key stage 4 and post-16 use these skills well in community-based activities such as work experience placements and visits to local shops and cafes.

Generally, many pupils develop their thinking skills well in lessons. For example, pupils with complex needs learn to sort shapes, classify materials and learn cause and effect through using switches. More able pupils organise leisure activities in the community, plan investigations in science and cook healthy meals. A few pupils benefit from solving puzzles set by staff as part of their daily routines.

Many pupils make sound progress in developing their communication skills. Pupils with complex needs and profound and multiple learning difficulties use a suitable range of communication skills well to communicate. These include signing, symbols and assistive technology. However, across the school, pupils for whom it is suitable do not use assistive technology, signing and symbols to support their communication needs consistently enough.

Over time, pupils that are more able make strong progress in developing their oracy skills. A majority of pupils engage well in discussion work and listen attentively to staff and fellow pupils. They develop the confidence to initiate discussion with visitors and explain clearly what they are doing and what their hopes are for the future.

Generally, many pupils make sound progress in developing their reading skills in line with their needs and abilities. They improve the accuracy of their reading and their understanding of what they have read. Pupils on the reading intervention programme make strong progress with their reading skills over time.

Most pupils make sound progress in developing their numeracy skills. For example, they use addition and subtraction with increasing confidence and use measuring skills accurately when weighing ingredients in food technology. Older pupils apply their numeracy skills well, such as when calculating profit margins for enterprise activities and when buying lunch at the local college.

A majority of pupils make appropriate use of information communication technology (ICT) to support their learning. For example, pupils at key stage 3 use desktop computers skilfully to create a fictional super hero character and older pupils at post-16 develop early skills in programming and coding. However, generally, pupils across the school do not develop their ICT skills sufficiently to support their learning.

A minority of pupils use and respond to basic greetings in Welsh. However, pupils' understanding and use of Welsh is underdeveloped.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils respond very well to the caring ethos of the school. Most pupils are pleasant and polite and form trusting relationships with each other and with staff. They are highly tolerant of one another and are respectful towards visitors. Over time, many pupils make strong progress in managing their behaviour.

Many pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. They respond well to activities, are proud of their achievements and share their work passionately with staff and visitors. In the very few cases where pupils become disengaged, they discuss difficulties and cooperate well with support staff and return to their learning activities in a timely manner.

Most pupils feel safe in school and know who to talk to if they are anxious. Most pupils develop a strong understanding of the importance of keeping safe online and when travelling in the community.

Many pupils have a positive attitude towards a healthy lifestyle. They understand how to make healthy choices relating to diet and take part enthusiastically in physical activities such as dancing. Many pupils use the outdoor play equipment confidently and independently during lunch and break times. A few pupils make strong development in their ability to work as a team through the cheerleading club and have benefitted from representing the school in the National Schools' Cheerleading Competition.

The school council plays an important role in the life of the school. Pupils make useful suggestions to improve their school experiences by raising issues of concern with members of the school council. For example, they share ideas on suitable meals which has resulted in a healthier school lunch menu for all.

Older pupils gain a valuable understanding of global and humanitarian issues through organising worthwhile activities such as enterprise projects, and fundraising events in aid of local charities. These activities enable them to understand how they can help others and support their development as ethical, informed citizens.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The school has a sound, strategic approach to curriculum planning. Leaders make appropriate and well-considered adaptations to the curriculum in order to meet the changing needs of pupils.

The school provides a relevant sensory curriculum for pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Other pupils follow a suitable formal or semi-formal learning pathway based on their needs and ability. Post-16 pupils follow beneficial learning pathways which develop their independence and independent learning skills, mostly leading to valuable accreditation in appropriate learning areas. In most cases, these different pathways allow pupils to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills as they move through the school.

Middle leaders prepare clear long-term learning plans which show understanding of pupils' needs and consideration of their interests. These plans include engaging and interesting learning experiences. However, in a few cases, leaders do not give enough thought to pupils' previous learning experiences when planning new activities.

There are suitable and popular option choices for all pupils in key stage 4 and in the post-16 provision. The school provides valuable off-site activities in partnership with other providers and agencies in order to broaden the learning experiences of its pupils. These include horse-riding, landscape gardening and activities in the school's eco centre in Padeswood.

There is strong, strategic planning for progression in pupils' literacy and numeracy and an effective system to monitor teachers' delivery and assessment of these skills. The provision for developing communication across the school is generally sound but staff are inconsistent in their application of the school's communication policy. There are missed opportunities for pupils to develop beneficial communication techniques such as signing.

The planning for pupils' skills in ICT is developing appropriately. However, the provision for Welsh language development is not ambitious enough. In addition, curriculum plans do not include enough activities to celebrate Welsh culture, heritage and values.

The provision for the development of pupil independence and independent living skills is a strength of the school. There are valuable and beneficial opportunities for older pupils to apply their knowledge and skills in real life situations in the local community and when they attend lessons at a further education college.

Teachers and support staff foster highly positive and valuable relationships with their pupils. They have comprehensive knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs. Staff treat pupils with respect and show a genuine desire to support and encourage them in their learning.

Many teachers demonstrate a solid understanding of pupils' prior attainment and the majority ensure that tasks are well-matched to their developmental needs. In many cases, teachers' planning relates closely to the targets set in pupils' IEPs. However, in a few lessons, tasks are not challenging enough and activities do not enable more able pupils to work independently. Generally, teachers manage behaviour very well and demonstrate effective techniques to engage their pupils in activities.

Many teachers use a wide range of suitable strategies to engage and interest pupils. For example, teachers use music to encourage pupils to dance and be active. Many teachers make good use of facilities such as the outside areas, the sensory rooms and rebound therapy to meet pupils' needs. Generally, teachers make effective use of stimulating resources to support teaching and learning. Teachers in the sensory department make good use of a range of specialist equipment to support pupils' physical and mobility needs including walkers, specialist seating, standing frames and switches. A few teachers use ICT resources suitably to introduce new work, such as the interactive white board. However, there are missed opportunities for pupils to use these resources routinely in lessons.

Many teachers demonstrate their expectations of pupils clearly and a minority make effective use of more able pupils to model good work. In a minority of lessons, teachers encourage their pupils to comment on the quality of their peers' work. Many teachers use questioning effectively to encourage and stimulate discussion with pupils. In a few cases, teachers use skilful questioning to enable pupils with more complex needs to take part in discussions.

Teachers use support staff effectively to support teaching and learning. These teaching assistants are valuable role models in lessons. They know pupils very well and work effectively with them.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has a strong inclusive ethos that places the pupils at the centre of all its work. It is successful in achieving its aims to provide a caring, supportive and safe learning environment where pupils can develop the skills they need to live happy, fulfilling lives. This ethos permeates the work of the school and has an important impact on pupils' progress and wellbeing.

Staff build positive partnerships with parents. This strong relationship helps parents support their child at home using many of the strategies in place at school. The role of the family engagement worker is key to the success of this process. Parents have regular opportunities to visit the school to take part in valuable information-sharing and training events such as for healthy eating, signing and first aid. The school provides parents with regular information on their child's progress and wellbeing through the use of digital technology, regular parents' meetings, newsletters and the annual report.

The school forms beneficial partnerships with a wide range of agencies, such as health, social services, training and work-based providers. These are particularly successful in supporting pupils' and their families. Most pupils at post-16 have suitable work experience placements and access college for one day a week. The school provides a high level of support to enable pupils to benefit from these experiences. Teachers ensure that pupils learn important skills at the school's independent living skills base. Pupils then use these skills successfully in college and work placements. There are well-considered plans to develop these skills further at a local respite home. The school provides an innovative 'Travel Trainer' programme to develop older pupils' ability to travel independently to school, college and to their work placement. As a result, many pupils make significant progress in their independence skills.

The personal and social education programme is a strength of the school. It provides pupils with a wide range of beneficial age and needs appropriate information. For example, it covers important areas such as radicalisation, sex and healthy relationships and on-line safety. The programme also provides valuable opportunities for pupils to develop positive attitudes towards working with others and supporting those who need help, for example through volunteering at the local food bank and raising money through charitable events. The school promotes healthy eating and drinking effectively and encourages pupils to make healthy choices at lunch time. It provides many opportunities for pupils to take part in physical activities in lessons and at break times.

Teachers include suitable targets for pupils in literacy, numeracy, ICT and personal social education in pupils' IEPs. They monitor pupils' progress in achieving these targets through termly reviews. They track pupil progress in literacy and numeracy using the school's adapted framework for assessment and use it well to set new targets and to inform planning. However, whole school tracking processes for other areas of learning do not capture the progress pupils make over time well enough.

The school provides a wide range of interventions to support pupils' varied needs. These include support for literacy, communication, behaviour and emotional literacy. However, the monitoring of the impact of these interventions on pupil progress is not sufficiently robust.

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

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides strong direction that focuses effectively on the wellbeing and standards of pupils. She has a clear vision and high expectations that are conveyed successfully across the school to ensure that pupils develop as confident, independent individuals.

The headteacher is supported by an experienced deputy who has strategic responsibility for developing an enriched, flexible and responsive curriculum that meets the diverse needs of the pupils. He has a comprehensive overview of pupil progress which he uses skillfully to support and challenge the performance of staff.

This ensures that effective pedagogy and purposeful provision is consistent across the school.

The school has established an effective leadership structure that focuses on deploying new and existing staff to meet the strategic needs of the school. A business manager and a finance officer both impact positively on the running of the school. Senior leaders work well as individuals and as a team to ensure that specific aspects of the school's work are led efficiently. They have developed a valuable whole-school ethos of enthusiastic collaboration where everyone is encouraged to contribute to initiatives. As a result, all staff are proud of the role they play within the school.

The school has developed useful self-evaluation processes that are logical and coherent. They include gathering evidence from a wide range of activities that provide leaders with a worthwhile evidence base to evaluate its work. However, leaders do not use these self-evaluation outcomes effectively enough to identify strengths and areas for development. The school's improvement plan has too many areas for development and its actions often focus on operational duties. As a result, leaders do not prioritise important key areas for improvement well enough and do not consider realistic and measurable success criteria to enable them to monitor and evaluate progress effectively.

Governors have a suitable understanding of the school's work. They acquire useful information through the leadership team's comprehensive reports and termly meetings with teachers. They play an active part in the school's self-evaluation procedures through participating in learning walks that focus successfully on the quality of provision. Generally, they challenge the school's leaders well, for example when analysing the performance of pupils.

Leaders promote and support the professional learning of all staff. Staff receive comprehensive training as part of the induction process. This includes useful training in manual handling and data protection training. Staff gain valuable knowledge and skills in important areas such as autistic spectrum disorder, behaviour management and curriculum reform. Planned professional development reviews and performance management meetings enable teachers and support staff to identify training needs in order to raise standards and improve provision.

Leaders ensure that individual staff members routinely share training information and good practice across the school.

The school has practical arrangements for teaching assistants to attend staff meetings to keep abreast of developments. Many of the support staff have received beneficial training to enable them to deliver intervention programmes to individual pupils and small groups and they are passionate about their work. Support staff with coordinator roles are well trained and show high levels of commitment to their responsibilities.

The school is proactive in identifying solutions to financial challenges and has successfully secured grant funding and donations to enhance the provision. For example, the sensory garden stimulates activity and creates multi-sensory memories that develops pupil's creative skills whilst the outdoor shelter and light and dark rooms are used effectively within therapeutic programmes.

The school makes effective use of grants. For example, they employ a family engagement officer and a literacy support worker. The school also provides worthwhile opportunities for staff to 'swap roles' for an agreed period of time. This ensures that they have a good understanding of how other departments throughout the school work and strengthens their ability to evaluate standards and provision across the school.

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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Publication date: 17/12/2018