



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

A report on
Pentre Church in Wales Controlled Primary School

**Pentre
Chirk
LL14 5AW**

Date of inspection: July 2022

by

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

About Pentre Church in Wales Controlled Primary School

Name of provider	Pentre Church in Wales Controlled Primary School
Local authority	Wrexham County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Church in Wales Voluntary Controlled
Number of pupils on roll	59
Pupils of statutory school age	44
Number in nursery classes	5
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 21.3%)	8.7%
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 22.2%)	38.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	September 2012
Start date of inspection	04/07/2022

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.

Overview

The Dee Valley Federation of schools was formed in January 2014 and consists of Froncysyllte Primary, Garth Primary and Pentre Church in Wales Controlled Primary schools. It is led by the recently appointed headteacher and a team of assistant headteachers at each of the three schools. These senior leaders manage the day to day running of each of their schools and assume responsibility for the operational matters at each school in the headteacher's absence.

Pentre Church in Wales Controlled Primary School is the largest school within the federation and is very much at the heart of its community in the village of Pentre. The caring and community ethos the staff promote is a notable aspect of its work. Pupils are happy and confident in school, and through their relationships with one and other they show kindness and many other Christian values they celebrate. Parents appreciate the support that staff provide for their children and speak warmly of the relationships they have with the school, including with the recently appointed headteacher.

Many pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills well in engaging learning experiences. They enthusiastically share their Welsh language skills, often using the language when they speak with increasing confidence. Across the school, many pupils make good progress in acquiring their digital skills, which they use confidently. During their time at the school, most pupils make suitable progress from their starting points. Although staff at the school know their pupils well, assessment processes do not always support pupils to develop their skills and make sustained progress over time, for example in their writing skills.

The headteacher, senior and middle leaders are beginning to have an impact on improving the opportunities for pupils across the federation. They have recently begun to reflect on the school's provision and consider necessary improvements to be made, for example in mathematics and teachers' assessment of pupils for the next steps in their learning.

Recommendations

- R1 Address the health and safety issue identified by the team during the inspection
- R2 Develop leadership at all levels across the federation, and share effective practice in all schools
- R3 Strengthen self-evaluation processes to focus on the impact of teaching on learning and the progress of pupils over time
- R4 Strengthen teachers' strategic planning for pupil progress across the wider curriculum
- R5 Secure teachers' understanding of effective classroom assessment to evaluate teaching and learning and identify how to help pupils move on in their learning
- R6 Improve the pace of teaching and matching activities to pupil needs

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will work with the local authority to review the school's progress.

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils start school with literacy and numeracy skills that are in line with those expected for their age. During their first year in school they make appropriate progress in developing these skills. Many pupils listen well to the adults they work with. Around half speak clearly to each other and adults, for example when explaining about their feelings. Many of the youngest pupils learn to match letters to the sounds that they make and begin to form letters and numbers correctly.

Many pupils across the school listen well to adults and to each other. Younger pupils are less confident when speaking. However, most older pupils have well developed speaking skills. Many use a good range of vocabulary when talking. For example, when describing the context of their learning, they extended their answers well. Many pupils make appropriate progress in speaking Welsh. Younger pupils answer the register and give their food choices at lunchtime in Welsh. Older pupils incorporate Welsh naturally into their work in school and often use Welsh and English together when they speak and write.

Many pupils develop suitable reading skills as they move through the school. A few younger more able readers read fluently and show their understanding by giving detailed accounts of stories they have read. As pupils progress, the reading skills of pupils in the middle of the school varies. Around half read well and use these skills effectively for research, for example when finding out about the lives of famous Welsh people. However, a minority of pupils of this age are not confident readers and do not enjoy reading. Many older pupils read fluently and with good pace and expression. However, a minority of pupils misread common words and have not developed sufficiently good reading stamina for their age.

Many younger pupils write for a range of purposes including making lists and writing invitations. Many pupils form letters and spell simple familiar words accurately. Pupils in Year 1 write instructions for planting seeds and describe Percy the Park Keeper using sentences with capital letters and full stops. Pupils in the middle of the school develop an appropriate range of styles of writing. Many pupils use these effectively in their topic work, for example to recount a recent visit to a chocolate factory. These pupils take pride in how they present their work and this is often of a higher standard than expected for pupils of this age. A few older pupils use a mature writing style with a well-developed vocabulary and varied sentence structures to interest and engage the reader. However, overall, the abilities of older pupils to write at length, and to apply their writing skills across the curriculum and the quantity of work they produce, do not match with their age and ability well enough.

Many pupils develop suitable mathematic skills. Younger pupils develop their number skills appropriately. They know number bonds to 10, identify 2D shapes and estimate and measure the length of items in the classroom using cubes successfully. Many pupils in the middle of the school develop a good range of useful mathematical skills, including identifying digital and analogue time, and finding fractions of numbers. They apply these skills well in their work across the curriculum, for example when learning how to work within a set budget for a household taking account of costs such as

house rental and saving money. Older pupils' skills focus mainly on number work, although more recently they have developed their understanding of angles and learnt to find the mean, median and mode when handling data. On a few occasions, they apply their mathematics skills across the curriculum, for example when using litres and millilitres to measure rainfall as part of their topic on climate change topic. However, a majority of pupils do not develop their numeracy skills in low level cross-curricular activities provided well enough. In general, the activities do not challenge a minority of pupils to make strong progress.

Across the school, most pupils' digital skills develop well. Younger pupils program moving toys successfully to move and turn. Older pupils incorporate a range of skills effectively into their topic work. For example, Years 5 and 6 pupils use search engines for research confidently, and navigation aids to plan band tours. They develop their digital skills further by using an app to compose and present music confidently when by creating music of an imaginary Welsh rock band. Most pupils' creative skills are developing well during these activities.

Most younger pupils develop their physical skills appropriately, for example through opportunities to create their own water chutes and use them in the outdoor area. A few older pupils attend sports activities after school. However, in physical education lessons, pupils spend too much time not engaging in developing their movement and balance skills.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils feel happy and safe in school. Nearly all benefit from the strong working relationships they have with staff and feel their teachers care about their well-being. Consequently, pupils are confident that any problems they bring to the attention of the school will be dealt with sensitively and effectively.

Most pupils feel they are treated fairly and are listened to by their teachers. They enjoy their assemblies and visits from external agencies, which contributes successfully to their strong understanding of equality and diversity. As a result, pupils reflect thoughtfully on their rights and their responsibilities towards other people. Most pupils know how to keep themselves safe, particularly when using digital technology online.

Pupils contribute positively to the life and direction of the school through a worthwhile range of leadership groups. For example, pupils representing the range of groups at the school collaborated recently with leaders to refresh the school's values. In addition, the 'ethos ambassadors' designed t-shirts that promoted the school's Christian ethos. Consequently, pupils feel a strong sense of belonging and nearly all pupils would recommend their school to someone else.

Nearly all pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite, welcoming and courteous to visitors. Older pupils set very good examples for younger pupils as throughout the school pupils of different ages are comfortable working and playing together. For example, during lessons nearly all pupils allow others to share their ideas, and show respect when others have a different opinion.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and arrive at lessons ready to learn. In the best examples, pupils work independently, sustain concentration over long periods and persevere to produce imaginative high-quality work. For example, through their topic work, pupils in Years 5 and 6 develop websites for a variety of enterprises. However, in general, very few pupils sustain concentration and persevere on activities to overcome any challenges or difficulties they encounter. In general, pupils are responsive to feedback they receive from teachers and, when prompted to do so, they improve their work appropriately. A very few pupils return to pieces of work to respond appropriately to the feedback to improve the work. As a result, many pupils do not make sustained progress over time.

A majority of pupils lack the confidence and resilience to tackle more challenging work and turn to their teacher before drawing upon their prior learning or using other strategies. Furthermore, a very few pupils have a negative view of their own ability, particularly when reading.

Pupils play enthusiastically during breaks and lunchtimes. Prior to the pandemic, many participated enthusiastically in team sports and after-school activities. Pupils have an appropriate awareness of healthy eating through the relative activities. Members of the the Criw Cymraeg support this well by running a break-time fruit shop by developing their ability to speak Welsh with increasing confidence. However, many pupils bring less healthy snacks to school as part of their packed lunch.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report on pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years of 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

Many teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils well and have good relationships with them. Teachers use Welsh regularly during the school day and are good role models for pupils in the use of the language in everyday situations.

In the best examples, many teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. However, a few teachers plan low level activities that do not challenge pupils well enough, for example in developing their writing skills. In these examples, the pace of lessons is slow and pupils do not make sufficient progress in skills.

In general, provision for the youngest pupils does not match well to their needs. Teachers plan mainly for pupils to learn through teacher directed activities and result pupils sit as a whole class for long periods of time. In these instances, pupils do not engage well with their learning and become distracted. The school's provision for pupils to learn outdoors is underdeveloped and this limits the opportunities for pupils to develop their physical skills. This hampers their abilities to develop as independent learners or make choices about the activities they undertake.

Plans to implement the Curriculum for Wales are at an early stage of development. Leaders and teachers share the new vision for the curriculum across the federation. Teachers have started to work with pupils to incorporate their ideas for topics into the curriculum overview for the school. However, the focus of the work on the curriculum

so far has been too much on pupil choice and encouraging them to use the formal language of the new curriculum. The provision to ensure that the curriculum they provide to offer learning experiences that build progressively on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding is underdeveloped.

Current teaching plans do not cover the breadth and range required and do not ensure that pupils have opportunities to experience all areas of learning. Teachers have not developed units of work for literacy and numeracy that build pupils' skills systematically. The provision for developing pupils' writing skills lacks coherence with skills such as spelling. A majority of older pupils do not incorporate these skills well enough when they write and do not write often enough. As a result, older pupils in particular do not make sound enough progress in line with their age and ability.

Teachers provide effective provision for pupils to develop their digital skills. The school is well resourced for digital learning and all pupils in the two classes for older pupils have access to their own devices. Teachers plan purposeful opportunities for pupils to use these. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 use spreadsheets to calculate the profits made following an enterprise activity where they made and sold items during the school's sports day. However, on occasions, teachers use technology with pupils when other ways of developing their learning might be more effective. For example, a few activities require pupils to navigate between too many web pages to complete activities. As a result, pupils take too long to complete tasks and the pace of pupils' learning is slow.

Most teachers and teaching assistants provide helpful verbal feedback to pupils as they carry out activities. They use questioning appropriately to check pupils' understanding and to extend their thinking. Teachers' written feedback to pupils often praises what they have done well. However, it does not often inform pupils what they can do to improve or provide the next steps in their learning.

Care, support and guidance

The welcoming environment and family approach are strengths of the school. Staff know their pupils very well and working relationships are mostly respectful, caring, and supportive.

The school has a strong relationship with the local community that supports the learning and well-being of pupils well. For example, the school works effectively with local secondary schools to aid the transition of pupils. In addition, staff work effectively in partnership with the community to develop learning resources within outdoor community spaces, such as an outdoor classroom and mud kitchen. However, due largely to limitations in the school's outdoor facilities, opportunities for pupils to participate meaningfully in outdoor learning and physical education are underdeveloped. Additionally, the pandemic has restricted the school's ability to sustain a meaningful programme of after-school activities.

Leaders take very good account of suggestions from pupils, both to direct their learning and improve their well-being. For example, pupils collaboratively choose topics they wish to learn about and recently made the decision to restart the 'daily mile'. However, some groups meet less regularly, and some initiatives, such as the suggestion box, have lost traction.

The school supports pupil well-being by working effectively with a wide range of external agencies and the local police officer. The school also draws effectively upon local and national well-being provisions. For example, teachers use well-being walls effectively to encourage pupils to self-regulate their emotions. For those pupils who require further emotional and well-being support, there is a specifically trained member of staff at the school.

School assemblies, strong links with the local church and regular acts of collective worship support pupils' spiritual development appropriately. These help pupils to understand issues relating to right and wrong and encourage pupils to reflect on a wide range of ethical and moral issues. The school has suitable sex and relationships education arrangements to support pupils' understanding of social behaviour. However, across the school, the provision for the development of pupils' personal and social education is not co-ordinated well enough in regular opportunities. As a result, the delivery of important aspects of pupil development is inconsistent. Provision to support pupils' understanding of keeping safe online is sound.

The school has sound systems to identify pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). The ALN co-ordinator works suitably with class teachers, parents and, when appropriate, external services to draft individual development plans. However, in many cases staff are not delivering the strategies and support identified within these plans with the agreed frequency. Consequently, this provision does not always meet the needs of the pupils well enough. As a result, the progress made by pupils identified as having with additional needs is restricted.

The school site is generally safe and secure. All staff have undertaken appropriate safeguarding training. All staff understand the federation's safeguarding processes and procedures well, including how to use the new digital system to record and report safeguarding concerns. There are suitable policies in place to ensure that there is a purposeful and cohesive culture of safeguarding. However, the school's procedure to monitor pupil attendance and follow up on any unknown absences is inconsistent and insecure.

Leadership and management

The federation is led by the recently appointed headteacher and a team of assistant headteachers at each of the three schools. These senior leaders manage the day to day running of each of their schools and assume responsibility for operational matters at each school in the headteacher's absence. Within a relatively short period of time, the headteacher has established a new vision to take the federation forward. He worked with stakeholders to agree the vision for the federation of LIONS: Learners leading Inspirational Opportunities in a Nurturing, Safe environment through faith. This vision reflects the warm and inclusive nature of each of the federation's schools.

The headteacher has implemented systems and processes to improve the way in which staff share information across the federation. Leaders have strengthened how well they communicate with parents and inform governors of new developments at the schools. Across the federation, many staff carry out their roles effectively and contribute well to improving outcomes for pupils. However, not all senior leaders model professional values and behaviour well enough and the majority of leaders do

not have a strategic impact across the federation. As a result, there are stark difference between many aspects, including the quality of teaching and learning between, and at times within, the three schools.

Senior leaders are beginning to work together to reflect on the strengths of the federation's approach to curriculum design. This has enabled them to identify the strengths across the federation and areas for development to inform future planning. For example, there has been rapid progress by leaders at Garth Primary School, which made improvements to curriculum provision to ensure continuity in planning and, as such, nearly all lessons are engaging and stimulating. However, across the federation, not all senior leaders support the headteacher to bring about the necessary improvements to address the weaknesses in provision or to improve pupil outcomes.

The headteacher has a clear focus on improving provision for teaching and learning and has already begun to tackle underperformance. Recently, he has redistributed curriculum leadership responsibilities to ensure that there is more balance within the curriculum teams and a distribution of expertise across the federation. This enables the schools to continue to develop their curriculum with the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. To achieve this, leaders encourage and support staff to innovate and trial new approaches. However, across the three schools, curriculum planning is at varying stages of curriculum development and leaders have not yet addressed any important misconceptions that staff have at this early stage.

Recently, the headteacher has re-established monitoring and self-evaluation activities across the federation. Soon after taking up his post, the headteacher has taught in every class in the three schools to get to know pupils and understand their experiences of school. In addition, he has met with every member of staff to seek their views on their strengths and those of the federation. He has begun to develop leadership capacity by involving other middle leaders in the monitoring and evaluation processes. For example, the numeracy leaders have recently undertaken the scrutiny of pupils' work to identify ways forward in developing numeracy across the three schools. As a result of this important work, these leaders are beginning feel more confident in their roles.

Leaders are beginning to identify the schools' strengths and areas for development. This information relates to national priorities, such as the Curriculum for Wales, and many leaders and staff have a sound awareness of national priorities in education. The federation's development plan reflects this and as a result of monitoring activities leaders have identified important aspects of the schools' provision that need improving. In addition, leaders analyse pupil performance data effectively. As a result of this work, many leaders are aware of the areas most in need of development, such as mathematics across the federation and sharing the good practice in writing.

Although leaders ensure that staff have opportunities to undertake useful professional development, they do not always ensure that training is aligns well enough with the schools' priorities. Staff are beginning to work together to share their strengths and in the best practice staff have valuable opportunities to watch each other teach, for example in the teaching of Welsh. However, this work is not consistent across the federation.

The federation's governors are well informed about the schools' work by the headteacher and many senior leaders across the federation. However, they have not resumed visits to the school to enable them to gain first-hand evidence and as a result they rely too heavily on information provided by leaders. Governors are keen to share their expertise in improving the school, for example using their knowledge and strengths in matters relating to health and safety and when diligently managing the financial arrangements of the three schools. They balance short-term and longer-term needs of the schools within the federation, and ensure that the funding from the pupil development grant effectively supports pupil well-being and progress to reduce barriers to learning. Governors keep up to date with national developments to support their work and are aware of their statutory responsibilities. Governors ensure that they have appropriate policies and procedures in place to promote the importance of healthy eating and drinking among pupils.

When attending the school sites, governors act as role models and encourage pupils to make healthy choices. They work well with leaders to ensure that the school has suitable safeguarding measures and enable a generally strong culture of safeguarding. For example, governors have purchased an electronic system to provide a more consistent approach to the recording of safeguarding concerns. However, not all senior leaders fully support the culture of safeguarding when ensuring effective implementation of the federation's attendance strategy.

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

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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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