



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

A report on

Forden C.I.W. School

**Forden
Welshpool
Powys
SY21 8NE**

Date of inspection: September 2022

by

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

About Forden C.I.W. School

Name of provider	Forden C.I.W. School
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Church in Wales
Number of pupils on roll	60
Pupils of statutory school age	60
Number in nursery classes	0
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%)	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%)	12%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	26/11/2013
Start date of inspection	26/09/2022

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

Forden Church in Wales Primary School is a nurturing place for pupils and staff alike. There is an overall feeling of inclusivity and a strong sense of belonging in the school. The headteacher, teachers and support staff take very good care of the pupils and want them to thrive in learning and in life. Well-being is placed at the heart of the school's ethos. All pupils and their families receive a genuine welcome and pupils enjoy coming to school and being part of such a reassuring learning environment. Teachers and support staff are there to help when needed. They offer pupils a range of learning opportunities, all of which help to keep pupils interested in their learning. However, these do not consistently provide sufficient challenge to pupils to ensure their progress and the development of their skills as independent learners.

Pupils are proud of Forden School and exhibit very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils know that staff expect them to respect everyone in the school community and to behave well. The engagement of pupils in their learning is a notable strength of the school. The school grounds offer a stimulating environment to extend pupils' learning. However, the school does not always make best use of this learning opportunity.

The headteacher provides considerate leadership and generally knows the school well. She has correctly identified important areas of the school's work that she wants to improve. These include pupils' extended writing and mathematics; nevertheless, evaluation and improvement processes require further honing. The headteacher values the opinions of staff, pupils, parents and governors, and uses these to improve the school. School staff trust each other and work well together to provide good support for each other and pupils.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the quality of teaching, including formative assessment, to ensure that pupils are challenged consistently
- R2 Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning processes to accurately identify and bring about necessary development
- R3 Utilise the outdoors through the planning of purposeful learning experiences

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

Many pupils begin school with levels of understanding and skills at or above those expected for their age. Overall, many pupils make positive progress from their individual starting points. However, more able pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of.

Nearly all pupils develop strong speaking and listening skills. In their earliest years in school, nearly all pupils' language as they enter the school is well developed for their age. They talk in full phrases and sentences with friends, share their ideas confidently with adults and speak to express themselves well. For example, when collaboratively completing jigsaws they express, 'This is my favourite', 'I like Captain Barnacle', 'Look it's all done'. As they progress through the school, pupils use the skills of speaking and listening well when asking questions or sharing ideas. In Year 2 pupils talk confidently about their work. They explain in detail what they have done and how they have worked. In the middle years of the school, nearly all pupils respond to questions with full answers and can explain their work in detail. By the time pupils have reached the oldest years in the school, nearly all pupils speak with confidence and can discuss their learning at length. Across the school, many pupils' speaking and listening skills in Welsh are developing appropriately. Most of the younger pupils respond to simple, familiar, everyday Welsh instructions effectively. Many older pupils can hold simple conversations with developing independence based on simple learned patterns, such as when role playing to order a sandwich. The criw Cymraeg pupils take their role very seriously and are enthusiastic role models in beginning to promote the use of conversational Welsh around the school.

Across the school, pupils' reading skills are at least appropriate for their age. Many pupils enjoy looking at and talking about the pictures in books. In Year 2, most pupils use strategies to decode unfamiliar words well. When reading fiction, these pupils recall and identify the main aspects of the text. Year 6 pupils read with developing fluency and expression. They predict the ending to stories, share details about the books they are reading and discuss their favourite authors with enthusiasm.

Most pupils have neat handwriting and present their work well. As the children progress through the school, most pupils consistently use full sentences, capital letters and full stops correctly. By the time pupils are in Year 2, they write for a range of purposes including writing descriptions of their monster. Most pupils in Years 3 and 4 write purposefully in a range of contexts, for example to inform the reader of the effects of global warming on the planet. In Years 5 and 6, pupils write accurately and in the best examples, with expression, such as when writing an imaginative recount of their Hajj journey. These pupils set out their work creatively and make choices about format and colour, dependent upon audience and purpose. In addition, most older pupils use their creative skills well, for instance when collaborating to play a simple tune on the glockenspiel.

Pupils with ALN and those that receive additional support develop strong relationships with adults and peers within the school. They participate fully in school life and their contributions are valued. As these pupils move through the school, they

make appropriate progress in terms of their literacy and numeracy skills and developing their independence.

Many pupils develop secure mathematical knowledge and skills, especially in their work using number, and use these in their learning across the curriculum. Younger pupils create digital bar graphs to represent their class vote on deforestation. In Years 3 and 4, pupils collect data in the form of tally charts when considering the different types of fireworks required for a display. When given the opportunity, many pupils Year 6 transfer their mathematical skills to a variety of contexts successfully, for instance when considering financial management of earnings and spending, pupils set a budget to plan a firework party.

Many pupils have good digital skills, which, when given the opportunity, they use across the curriculum successfully. In Years 3 and 4, pupils program an animation to advertise their imaginative wildflowers by creating a repeating pattern. They take photographs, select images, insert text and make decisions about font size and type to create a poster. In Years 5 and 6, pupils use programming software to input code to make a robotic device follow instructions. They successfully use databases and spreadsheets linked to authentic experiences, such as inputting codes to sort, interrogate, extract information and analyse the data by asking different questions regarding carbon dioxide levels, when studying a project based on the environment.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are proud members of Forden CIW Primary School. They are confident that adults and their peers will help them if they have a problem. This trust underpins relationships across the school.

Most pupils' behaviour is good. They are polite and treat staff, peers, and visitors with courtesy and respect. Most older pupils think the school's approach to managing behaviour is fair and effective and have a good awareness of the purpose of class rules and rewards. Most pupils play co-operatively, take turns and support each other well when playing games and socialising at break times.

Most pupils understand how to keep healthy, including the importance of making healthy choices in their diet and exercise. For example, nearly all pupils benefit from a variety of fruit at playtimes. They develop as healthy individuals and take part in physical exercise enthusiastically. For instance, older pupils have benefitted from external rugby and archery coaches and a visit to an outdoor pursuit centre to participate in activities such as kayaking and rock climbing.

Most pupils understand how to keep safe when online and complete an annual digital safety agreement between themselves and their teacher. Most pupils develop a good understanding of the importance of developing as ethically informed citizens through their awareness of the values that are promoted by the school. For example, older pupils explain the importance of respect and their class vision that focuses on the importance of identity and belonging.

Following a period of inactivity due to the pandemic, the work of pupil groups and pupil voice in the classroom is at an early stage of resumption. For example, the Criw Cymraeg group is beginning to re-establish the use of more social Welsh among pupils but this has yet to impact on the life and work of the school.

Nearly all pupils arrive at school on time, eager to learn. They settle quickly to tasks and concentrate well for extended periods of time. Most pupils are enthusiastic learners who apply themselves confidently to learning experiences. By the time pupils are in Years 3 and 4, nearly all focus well during discussion, for example when comparing the similarities and difference between clothes and uniform worn today and in Victorian times. When pupils reach the older year groups they listen to adults and each other carefully and respond with answers indicating they have thought about what they have heard.

When given the opportunity, they work collaboratively with their peers in pairs or groups and support each other's' learning. They treat the contributions of others with respect, listen well and respond positively to their ideas. However, a minority of pupils lack resilience when challenged in their learning.

Across the school, nearly all pupils demonstrate confidence in the way they interact with each other, and with familiar adults. They are happy to share their views and ideas while respectfully taking on board what others have to say. Most pupils contribute eagerly to lessons. They know it is important to attend school and that they need to be in school to learn and progress.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school is making steady progress on its journey to implementing the new Curriculum for Wales. Teachers work collaboratively to plan learning experiences that reflect the school's ethos well. They provide a suitable range of opportunities that develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world around them and encourage them to be ambitious in their aspirations for the future. For example, older pupils consider the effects of global warming and debate the issues surrounding rising sea levels.

Teachers use a thematic whole school approach to curriculum design which provides meaningful opportunities for collaboration between year groups. For instance, a project looking at farming in the local area provides pupils with thought-provoking opportunities to investigate themes such as, protest, the use of slogans and energy conservation, culminating in a whole school musical 'A Big Green Adventure'.

Teachers provide a suitable range of opportunities for pupils to learn about the culture and heritage of Wales. Such as the "Ein Milltir Sgwar" project which enabled pupils to engage with local issues and social change, and to identify how their personal story is part of the wider picture of Wales. Following the easing of pandemic restrictions, staff have reintroduced some purposeful educational visits. Trips to Hay on Wye literary festival and Offa's Dyke enhance the school's curriculum well and support pupils' interests and knowledge effectively. However, teachers do not exploit the school's grounds well enough to enable pupils to benefit from a broad range of purposeful outdoor learning experiences.

The school's arrangements to plan for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are generally sound. As a result, most pupils make satisfactory progress and are beginning to apply these skills effectively across other curriculum areas. Provision to develop younger pupils' digital skills is generally appropriate. It ensures that pupils develop suitable skills and confidence when working with software and devices. However, teachers do not develop older pupils' digital skills well enough. A majority of staff use basic Welsh effectively in the classroom.

However, teachers do not always encourage pupils to speak, or ask and answer questions in Welsh.

There are respectful and positive working relationships between adults and pupils. This contributes to a calm learning environment where pupils feel listened to. Teachers have good subject knowledge and generally provide clear explanations and instructions so that pupils can engage readily in their tasks. However, adults often over-direct and scaffold learning too tightly rather than facilitating opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and understanding. As a result, a minority of pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Where teaching is more effective, teachers use a range of approaches to maintain a suitable pace to learning and questioning techniques that challenge pupils' thinking about more complex issues. However, the pace of teaching is too often slow and, in these instances, too much time is spent discussing tasks. As a result, opportunities for pupils to develop as autonomous learners are inhibited.

Teachers successfully deploy support staff to assist the development of pupils' skills and well-being. For example, teaching assistants provide effective emotional support for targeted pupils and encourage positive social interaction between groups of learners.

A majority of teachers use success criteria during lessons. However, their use of these is inconsistent and does not always provide pupils with the opportunity to reflect upon their learning effectively. The quality of feedback to pupils does not focus enough on supporting them to improve their work. As a consequence, pupils do not have a secure enough understanding of the steps they need to take to move their learning forward.

Care, support and guidance

The school's care, support and guidance for pupils and families is effective and of good quality. Trusting relationships between staff and pupils and within the staff team is a strength of the school, creating a strong ethos. The school promotes a relentless focus on inclusion and pupils' well-being. It prioritises its work with families to ensure pupils are safe, happy, and ready to thrive.

The school provides regular and appropriate opportunities to support the development of pupils' spiritual and ethical beliefs. Regular collective worship provides a space for pupils to come together in celebration and to reflect on a range of cultures and consider the world from different perspectives. Themes such as homelessness and the experiences of people who are victims of war are sensitively considered. For example, pupils contemplate the plight of the Ukrainian people when considering the impact global events have on the lives of others. Staff engage pupils in discussion about the local book bank at the church and how a local homeless café is supporting people. These experiences guide children to reflect on the school value of respect.

The school manages the provision for additional learning needs (ALN) well. There are sound processes in place to identify pupils' needs quickly. Senior staff collaborate purposefully to provide teachers with guidance, useful strategies, and actions to help pupils overcome barriers to learning. Informal systems and practices to support the provision for pupils with ALN are working well. Regular pupil review

meetings held with teachers consider a useful range of helpful information, to inform support for pupils and develop the expertise of staff. Pupils benefit from this whole school approach and make good progress. Learning support staff access the necessary training to understand pupils' needs. They support pupils and their families effectively, helping pupils to engage with their learning.

The school is successful in involving parents in the life of the school. There are regular opportunities for families to access staff and governors who are responsive to the social and emotional needs of the pupils. This has a positive impact on the behaviour, resilience, and engagement of most pupils.

Parents have regular opportunities to discuss pupils' well-being and progress with teachers. Parents feel that staff resolve any concerns promptly. Teachers provide parents with comprehensive reports on their child's progress annually and welcome them into school to view their child's work every Wednesday. Parents welcome these arrangements.

Breakfast club provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to start their day having eaten, socialised with their friends, and engaged in a range of games and creative opportunities such as making a tea-stained treasure map. This strategy supports a 'readiness for learning' approach.

The school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop leadership roles through applying to join one of the councils on offer such as the School Council, the Criw Cymraeg or Sports Ambassadors. Pupils, led by the Sports Ambassadors, participate in playground games, such as Duck, Duck, Goose and Tag, or quietly access board games and social groups, demonstrating respect and cooperation.

The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding about healthy lifestyles. Parents provide fruit for pupils to eat during breaktimes and physical activity is ensured through a regular range of after school clubs, and timetabled swimming and physical education lessons. The school is developing its outdoor provision. 'Forest Friday' encourages pupils to develop an appreciation for outdoor learning and life skills. However, overall, staff do not make the most of the outdoor environment to support pupils' learning.

Generally, the school is a calm environment where staff encourage pupils to care for each other, collaborate respectfully and approach activities diligently. This impacts on pupils' sense of responsibility and desire to do well. Pupils are proud of their work and their school.

In lessons, a minority of pupils demonstrate the use of the '4 B's' approach, 'Brain, Book, Buddy, Boss' as a way of independently solving problems. Where staff implement this regularly it is a useful tool for developing pupil resilience and independent learning.

The headteacher considers pupils' safety to be central to the school's ethos. This emphasis creates a strong safeguarding culture within the school. Pupils and parents report that incidents of bullying are rare and, as a result, nearly all pupils feel happy and safe. The school monitors pupils' attendance effectively and addresses persistent absence when necessary. The systems to support and challenge low attendance are robust and this results in a positive attitude to attendance across the school.

Leadership and management

The headteacher leads the school with care and compassion. She promotes an inclusive ethos that seeks to meet the needs of all its pupils and families. Her vision and the values that underpin it aim to provide a climate where every child feels safe and cared for. As a result, pupils are happy and communicate that they are striving to be resilient and independent.

Leaders have a suitable strategic vision for the school. They link areas of improvement to national priorities. However, overall, school improvement processes do not identify sufficiently or precisely enough the necessary resources to ensure successful implementation of improvement priorities.

There is a strong team ethos, where staff work together and contribute appropriately to processes that support their development, such as performance management. Senior leaders use the professional standards to engage in sound professional discussion, work with staff strengths, provide motivation and identify appropriate support. Staff value this approach.

There is a developing culture of shared leadership. A broader range of staff are beginning to take responsibility for aspects of school development and participate in professional learning opportunities to support them. Most staff are confident to share their thoughts and ideas as they take on new roles. For example, the appointment of an assistant headteacher has increased leadership capacity and teaching staff are increasingly taking responsibility for areas of learning and experience. Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a priority and a strong safeguarding culture underpins the work of the school.

The governing body is supportive of the headteacher's and staff's well-being. Governors work suitably to ensure that the school is an appropriate learning environment. However, they do not always have a strong enough understanding of the school's improvement priorities, this limits their ability to support and challenge the decisions of leaders. The governing body ensures that there are appropriate arrangements for healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors undertake a suitable range of monitoring activities, such as listening to learners, learning walks and work scrutiny. From this they identify a few of the school's strengths and areas for development. for example identifying writing, mathematics, and the building of pupils' resilience as areas of improvement. However, there are areas that leaders have not identified that impact on the quality of the pupils' learning experiences and the progress they make, for example the quality of teaching and feedback and the purposeful planning for pupils' use of the outdoor environment.

Leaders manage resources well and use the pupil development grant purposefully to provide beneficial provision and support for identified pupils. For instance, leaders use resources from the grant to run a successful breakfast club and provide music tuition to develop focused attention and self-regulation.

The headteacher and governors fully support a suitably broad professional learning offer for all staff ensuring regular opportunities for staff to engage in development that supports their role. These opportunities link directly to the implementation of school improvement priorities or are personally motivating, supporting both curriculum and

well-being provision. For example, staff have developed an understanding of attachment disorders and how to promote pupils' self-esteem through the provision of useful strategies for older learners. Opportunities to support curriculum implementation and assessment, teaching and learning are beginning to support the school's identified priorities and result in greater consistency. However, currently leaders do not sufficiently evaluate the impact of the professional learning offer on provision and pupil progress.

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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