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

A report on

Saltney Ferry C.P. School

Saltney Ferry Road
Saltney Ferry
Chester
Flintshire
CH4 0BN

Date of inspection: September 2022

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Saltney Ferry C.P. School

Name of provider	Saltney Ferry C.P. School
Local authority	Flintshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	134
Pupils of statutory school age	91
Number in nursery classes	26
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 the Primary sector is 21.3%)	38.3%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the Primary sector is 22.2%)	25.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	5.5%
Date of headteacher appointment	05/09/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	20/01/2014
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

Saltney Ferry Primary School is a caring and supportive learning environment where pupils develop positive attitudes and an effective understanding of important characteristics for lifelong learning, such as independence and perseverance. All adults at the school care for pupils considerately and thoughtfully. They place a high value of developing pupils' well-being and treat all with respect.

Nearly all pupils make a highly positive start at the school and begin to develop knowledge and skills quickly. However, their progress through the school is inconsistent. While teachers provide pupils with engaging learning experiences, they do not always build well enough on their knowledge and understanding. As a result, pupils do not develop well in some important areas of learning, such as their reading, writing and digital skills.

Staff plan and deliver a broad range of opportunities for pupils to help them learn about and empathise with the needs of others, and to understand diverse viewpoints on important worldwide issues, such as global warming. They provide a useful range of targeted support for pupils with identified additional needs. However, at present leaders do not evaluate the effect this provision well enough.

The school has a new headteacher, who has quickly developed a constructive relationship with staff and with pupils. He sets a positive example and has begun to set in place the foundation for needed improvements. However, at present the school does not evaluate itself nor plan for improvement robustly enough. As a result, it does not always address shortcomings in teaching and in learning effectively.

Recommendations

R1 Improve pupils' reading and writing skills

R2 Improve pupils' Welsh language and their digital skills

R3 Ensure that teachers maintain high expectations, and challenge all pupils to achieve consistently

R4 Implement effective procedures to evaluate the work of the school and address identified areas for improvement robustly

R5 Ensure that planned learning experiences build on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding systematically

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress about 12 months after the publication of this report.

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils begin at the school with skills below those expected for their stage of development. Many pupils in nursery and the youngest class make rapid progress. However, after this beneficial start, pupils' progress slows too much and is inconsistent. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make sound progress towards their individual goals. Most pupils use their 'learning powers' well to recall previous learning, and often apply their skills across the curriculum appropriately.

When pupils start nursery, many have relatively underdeveloped speech, communication, and personal and social skills. However, they make good progress, settle into school life quickly and develop positive relationships with the staff and their peers. They respond well to routines and engage positively with learning experiences. Many of the younger pupils begin to develop their confidence as speakers, and over time they become confident when talking in a range of situations. By Year 3, many pupils talk purposefully together to help solve problems, such as how to build a stable pyramid out of plastic cups or straws. Their use of language is purposeful, precise and related to their tasks. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils share their thoughts and opinions confidently, adjusting their speech for the audience appropriately.

Overall, pupils' basic reading skills develop well enough for the majority to read simple texts in line with their stage of development. Early in the school, most pupils develop a basic knowledge of letters and their associated sounds and use this understanding to help them become readers with a limited degree of fluency. However, as they progress through the school, pupils develop few other strategies to help them read more challenging texts or to establish a thorough understanding of what they are reading.

In the classes of the younger pupils, many show enthusiasm for writing when experimenting with mark making. For instance, pupils label simple diagrams and use their emergent writing to note their ideas. By Year 2, pupils are starting to understand the need for sentences to have a capital letter at the beginning and full-stop at the end, and most understand the need for appropriate space between letters. Many older pupils develop a good understanding of the characteristics of different genre of writing and apply their writing skills purposefully in a few contexts, particularly in the class of the oldest pupils where they choose words for effect carefully. However, a majority of pupils' do not write well enough at length, for instance using varied or more complex sentence structures competently. Their grasp of punctuation and spelling is still weak, and the standard of their presentation in many cases is poor.

Few pupils make good progress in developing their Welsh language skills. Most pupils respond appropriately to simple classrooms commands. The youngest pupils begin using simple phrases, such as 'bore da' confidently and a few thank adults in Welsh independently. Older pupils are beginning to use simple greetings and phrases, for example when responding to the lunch register. As they progress through the school, older pupils communicate simple information about themselves, such as saying where they live. However, many lack sufficient knowledge and skills

and confidence to speak well enough, for instance to respond to simple questions in Welsh.

Many pupils make effective progress in developing their mathematical skills and understanding. The youngest pupils join in with number rhymes and songs while learning to count and identify numbers confidently. Over time, many pupils develop their skills progressively, and by Year 2 are beginning to work accurately with numbers to a hundred and beginning to tell the time accurately. As they progress through the older classes, pupils' understanding becomes more developed, and by Year 6 they draw and measure angles and can calculate percentages. Many pupils apply these skills to a similar standard in their work across the curriculum.

Many pupils are beginning to develop and apply a limited range of digital skills, although their progress is not consistent across the school. Younger pupils play games on tablet computers to support their learning and upload their work to an online platform confidently. In Year 2, pupils make creative short, animated films about the life of Queen Elizabeth II. By Year 6, many pupils use an appropriate range of programs competently. For example, they create and save their own musical composition. However, pupils do not always have a good enough understanding of how to retrieve their own saved work and have a limited understanding of areas of information technology, such as spreadsheets and databases. While they use the internet for research confidently, a minority of pupils do not apply a range of digital skills across all areas of learning well enough.

Many pupils enjoy using their creative and artistic skills, for example creating and mixing music tracks. Across the school, many use and apply their problem solving and thinking skills well, for example when pressing flowers to extract colours in the outdoor mud kitchen.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils behave well and show high levels of care and consideration for others. They have positive working relationships with members of staff. Most pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Many settle quickly to their work and move between independent tasks sensibly, focussing appropriately relative to their age and stage of development.

Through the curriculum and learning activities, most pupils develop a sound understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They talk with confidence about how to eat sensibly and describe the benefits of being physically active. Most develop an effective understanding of sustainability and environmental issues. In a few cases, this includes opportunities to discuss issues around the different perspective of diverse groups and the dangers of misinformation. For example, pupils in Year 5 explore thoughtfully the differing perspectives of oil companies and environmental pressure groups when creating an imaginary email exchange.

Many pupils reflect thoughtfully on issues of equity and fairness. For example, pupils in Year 2 consider the best way of supporting refugees coming to Wales and engage with a local charity to help refugees from Ukraine. They understand the importance of celebrating diversity and ensuring equality in terms of protected characteristics, such as race and sexual orientation. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 discuss the

nature of disability, whether it is always visible and how adaptations can be made to promote inclusion.

Pupils in leadership roles, such as the school council and the eco-committee, take their roles and responsibilities seriously and are keen to contribute their thoughts and ideas. They make an appropriate contribution to the work and life of the school.

Most pupils begin to develop resilience and perseverance from an early age, responding well to the school's focus on identifying and encouraging these characteristics. Most pupils reflect well on their skills as learners, using the school's 'learning powers', such as independence and imagination. Pupils demonstrate these characteristics most strongly in those classes where the quality of teaching is strongest and where pupils feel most engaged and stimulated by their lessons. Most pupils collaborate and support each other consistently when they find tasks difficult and when they come across problems in their learning. However, where the quality of teaching is less effective and pupils are less interested and challenged by their tasks, a minority struggle to maintain focus in group settings even for short periods of time.

Most pupils persevere when solving problems and consider different approaches until they find a solution. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 explore different ways to build the tallest structures by experimenting with different materials and techniques. In many classes, pupils are starting to identify the level of challenge that is appropriate to their stage of development. However, at present this often involves them working through tasks of increasing difficulty rather than selecting the challenge that is most appropriate for them initially.

Many pupils develop as reflective learners and are beginning to be able to identify helpfully how they can improve their skills. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 evaluate the extent to which they develop their independent learning skills and how successful they are at collaborating as part of a group. They look at ways they can improve this, for example considering ways to avoid distraction. Most pupils are keen to talk about how effective they have been in their tasks and are beginning to develop a 'language of learning' that helps them to consider what they do well and what needs improvement. In many cases, pupils reflect well on the effectiveness of their work. This begins at an early age, for example a few pupils in nursery discuss with adults how well they have carried out their activities. Pupils respond well to opportunities to reflect on whether they have been successful in their learning tasks or not. However, the value of this is often limited by the quality of the success criteria provided by teachers, which do not always help them understand what makes their work effective.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has developed a vision for its curriculum that involves all stakeholders. It has a focus on contributing to the local community and on developing characteristics in pupils, such as to be companionate and inclusive. The curriculum promotes equality and diversity well and challenges stereotypes while supporting pupils to develop healthy relationships. Staff collaborate to create a range of learning experiences that incorporate the areas of learning and experience of the Curriculum for Wales along with cross-cutting themes, such as careers and the world of work. As

a result, the curriculum helps to raise pupils' aspiration and encourages them to consider the attributes they will need for the future.

The school provides engaging opportunities for pupils to experience and understand the history and culture of Wales. Visits to places around Wales, such as Cardiff Bay and the Senedd, help pupils understand the Wales of today, while time at a mining heritage centre gives them an understanding of Welsh heritage. However, despite focussing well on these important cultural experiences, there is not a strong enough emphasis on the value of learning to speak the Welsh language.

Provision for outdoor learning is effective. Teachers ensure that younger pupils engage well in a broad range of activities that support their development effectively and draw upon the principles of foundation learning well. For example, pupils develop useful physical skills in the construction area and when navigating an obstacle course. They gain a strong understanding of shapes by searching for them in the local environment.

Teachers have identified a broad range of topics for the whole school that give pupils a wide range of experiences. They provide a suitable range of opportunities for pupils to participate in deciding what they learn. However, a lack of structure for the progressive and continuous development of pupils' knowledge and skills over time, for example in pupils' literacy and digital skills, means there is little coherence in pupils' learning journey. As a result, pupils do not develop skills, such as reading and digital skills, well enough. The school has developed a new approach to planning learning in the short-term, which has a clear focus on helping teachers to evaluate pupils' learning and consider their next steps. However, this approach is not used consistently in all classes.

Throughout the school, all teachers create calm and purposeful learning environments. They engage with pupils considerately, praising them purposefully. In most cases, teachers have appropriate objectives for learning experiences and communicate these to pupils helpfully. They use questioning thoughtfully to help pupils think and develop their ideas. Throughout the school, learning support assistants make a very strong contribution to pupils' learning. They support and challenge pupils expertly, helping them take their next steps in learning.

In the nursery and the class of the younger pupils, teachers and support staff engage and challenge pupils effectively. Their planned learning experiences are of high quality and encourage pupils to learn through play and discovery, for example by searching for and identifying shapes in the outdoor environment. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and make rapid progress. Throughout the rest of the school, teachers provide suitable learning experiences. However, they do not provide appropriate challenge consistently enough and their expectations of the quality and standard of pupils' work is not always high enough. As a result, pupils do not make strong enough progress in important areas of their learning.

Throughout the school, teachers provide pupils with beneficial oral feedback during their learning. In many cases, this helps pupils to understand what they need to do to complete tasks and to improve their learning. Teachers' use of coloured highlighters shows pupils where they have been successful and where they can make further improvements. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to act on this

helpful guidance. Teachers provide a few opportunities for pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers. However, the criteria that they give to pupils to do this is too often a list of tasks to complete and not always focused well enough on helping pupils to understand what will improve their work.

Care, support and guidance

The school works effectively to ensure high levels of well-being amongst pupils. There are many opportunities for pupils to be physically active during lunch and break times, for example the school provides basketballs, skipping ropes and cones for them to use on the yard. In the classes of the younger pupils, they have frequent opportunities to use bikes and trikes to develop their physical skills and be active. Older pupils benefit from timetabled periods of swimming lessons at a local pool. Staff regularly plan activities to ensure that pupils have a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating and a balanced diet. As a result, most pupils talk knowledgeably about foods that are beneficial to eat and those which they should eat less frequently. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school that helps pupils to feel safe and secure. This includes effective opportunities in the school's curriculum to help pupils to develop a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe online, such as how to identify unsafe websites.

The school's curriculum and planned learning experiences encourage pupils to reflect on their strengths as learners and to identify ways to improve. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 identify ways to avoid distractions and to improve their ability to concentrate. There are regular opportunities for pupils to consider moral issues, for example exploring the meaning of friendship in philosophy lessons.

Following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, leaders have begun to re-establish links with the local community, for example through fund raising and charity events. The school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn about their own and other cultures, for example exploring Hinduism by looking at the festival Diwali. Teachers plan suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the features of different countries around the world and to explore environmental issues. For example, pupils in Year 5 explore different viewpoints and false information related to the environmental crisis, how newspapers give different perspectives on climate change and weather, and the importance of water conservation.

Staff develop beneficial opportunities for pupils to empathise with the needs of others. For instance, pupils in Year 2 investigate the needs of refugees and put together hygiene packs for distribution by a local charity. Suitable acts of daily collective worship support pupils to consider their beliefs and develop their spiritual awareness, as well as a sense of community within their school. A suitable range of pupil voice groups play an appropriate role in the life and work of the school, including the school council and eco-committee. Pupils have regular opportunities to participate in cultural and sporting events, and performance. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 take part in performances, such as Treasure Island, and younger pupils enjoy tennis taster sessions.

The delivery of support for pupils with ALN benefits from strong leadership from the school's ALN co-ordinator and effective support from well-experienced and skilled support assistants. The co-ordinator ensures that all staff are kept up to date with

developments in national reforms. She helps to ensure that they build their understanding of the needs of pupils with ALN, for example through training on supporting pupils with autistic spectrum condition. Staff work effectively with the coordinator to identify actions to help support the progress of pupils with ALN that consider the views of pupils and parents appropriately. In addition, the school provides an appropriate range of support in response to an identified range of pupil needs. However, leaders recognise that they are not currently monitoring and evaluating the impact of targeted groups sufficiently well. As a result, they are not clear about how well the additional support they provide improves pupils' learning. New arrangements to ensure the coherent delivery, implementation and monitoring of the full range of support programmes to help pupils are at a very early stage of development.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has been at the school for only a few weeks, and in a very short time has got to know pupils and staff well. He has shared a vision with staff centred around creating a positive environment where developmental feedback is welcomed by all partners. Leaders are setting strategic plans in place that focus well on helping the school grow as a positive and self-improving learning environment. The headteacher sets a good example and is a positive role model. For example, he teaches one afternoon a week, uses the school's new planning format effectively and provides engaging and challenging lessons for pupils.

In the recent past, the school has set in place a few effective whole-school strategies that have improved learning and pupils' well-being successfully. For example, the schools 'learning powers' strategy has embedded well, and pupils understand the role of these strategies in detail. As a result, they talk about their use of these 'powers', such as perseverance, 'having a go' and being independent to help them to try their best, to organise themselves and work to independently.

Over time, leaders have managed the performance of staff suitably. For example, they have developed whole-school targets that link with national priorities helpfully. However, these have had an inconsistent impact on the quality of teaching and learning at the school

The governing body know the school well and challenge leaders supportively. They have a strong understanding of the schools' improvement initiatives and how these fit with national strategies, such as the Curriculum for Wales. Previously, they gathered a comprehensive range of information through visits to the school, such as about how pupils of different ages and stages of development are supported and challenged in the classroom. However, they have not fully restarted this helpful work following periods when they could not access to the school. Therefore, while they question the school helpfully, for example about the impact of the class structures on pupils' learning, they do not yet have a sufficient range of independent information. Governors understand their role in relation to healthy eating and drinking, and the school has appropriate arrangements to promote these well.

Leaders have planned a purposeful range of activities to help them evaluate the work of the school. However, currently the school does not evaluate the quality of learning and teaching in sufficient detail. As a result, overtime, leaders have not identified well

enough some important shortcomings in teaching and learning, such as pupils' underdeveloped reading skills. Subsequently, leaders have not been able to focus improvement priorities or professional learning on areas that need improvement sharply enough. Leaders have begun to put together suitable strategies for improvement, that focus on identified areas of the school's work, such as improving pupils' Welsh language skills. In general, leaders use the pupil development grant appropriately to help support and develop pupils' learning, for example on helping to improve the skills of pupils at risk due to disadvantage.

Training for staff links well with national priorities, and in a majority of cases to school priorities. For example, the ALN co-ordinator has attended a useful range of professional learning on national reforms. As a result, she has developed a strong understanding of this area and is working diligently to evaluate and reform the school's provision for pupils with ALN. There are an appropriate range of professional development opportunities linked with both individual and school needs, for example for staff to develop their understanding on how to improve the younger pupils' speaking skills. However, professional learning has not always addressed well a few ongoing priorities nor had a strong enough impact on pupils' learning, such as whole staff training on raising standards in pupils' writing. Overall, there has been limited professional learning focusing on improving the quality of teaching.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer 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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