



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

A report on
Laugharne V.C.P. School

**Orchard Park
Laugharne
Carmarthenshire
SA33 4TE**

Date of inspection: October 2022

by

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

About Laugharne V.C.P. School

Name of provider	Laugharne V.C.P. School
Local authority	Carmarthenshire
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Voluntary Controlled
Number of pupils on roll	68
Pupils of statutory school age	60
Number in nursery classes	7
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 23.0%)	20.2%
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 16.1%)	36.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	2.5%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/10/2013
Start date of inspection	24/10/2022
There is an interim leadership team at the school. The acting headteacher has been in post since the middle of June 2022 and is also responsible for a neighbouring school.	

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

There is a calm and positive ethos in Laugharne VCP School, where pupils and staff are happy and respectful of each other. The working relationship that exists between the staff and the pupils is special and supports well-being and learning effectively. This is particularly evident in the positive encouragement staff provide for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN).

There has been an interim arrangement in leadership over recent months. Current leadership is robust and places pupils' well-being and learning at the heart of everything they do. Leaders also take good account of staff well-being and support their professional learning well. They know what the school does well, and what it needs to improve, and has detailed plans for developing these.

Staff at all levels collaborate effectively to ensure that they provide effective cross-curricular experiences to support pupils' learning and well-being. These are based on the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. Activities are interesting and exciting for the pupils. This motivates them well and inspires them to learn. As a result, nearly all pupils behave well, are happy at school and make progress that is at least good in their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. However, only a few pupils speak Welsh to a suitable standard. Leaders have identified this as an area for development and have plans in place to improve it.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that pupils make good progress in their Welsh speaking skills
- R2 Embed the recently adapted provision to support pupils with additional learning needs in the school's practice
- R3 Share the effective practice that exists in delivering the Curriculum for Wales across the school

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils have literacy and numeracy skills that are appropriate to their age when they start school, but their social skills are less well developed. Nearly all make good progress in developing a range of skills year on year. Most pupils with additional learning needs make progress that is at least good in their individual targets.

Nearly all pupils make good progress in their English literacy skills as they move through the school. They listen attentively to adults and each other and respond appropriately to instructions and questions. The oracy skills of most pupils are developing well. Most respond enthusiastically when asked about their work and are happy to describe what they are doing and what they think about their work. Most have appropriate reading skills that allow them to access other areas of the curriculum and to research for information as they get older. For example, pupils in Year 4 use their research skills confidently to find key information related to World War 2. Pupils' writing skills are also developing well, with younger ones enjoying mark-making using different materials to depict letters and simple words. Older pupils enjoy writing as part of a cross-curricular theme. One notable example is where pupils make models of an Anderson Shelter as a homework task and write a clear account of how they made it and a story of when they sheltered in it during the war. This demonstrates their ability to write empathetically.

Nearly all pupils make good progress in their mathematical development. Nearly all younger pupils count to 20 and have good knowledge of odd and even numbers to 10. They engage in independent activities that support the development of their number skills and have a sound mathematical vocabulary. For example, they use a comprehensive range of mathematical terms when sorting 2D shapes. By the end of Year 4, nearly all pupils have a sound grasp of addition and subtraction facts and use these to solve problems. Most use measuring skills accurately in context to enrich their knowledge. For example, they draw and measure sea creatures using centimetres. Nearly all older pupils use a variety of numeracy skills appropriately and apply these intelligently in other areas across the curriculum, particularly in problem-solving activities. A good example of this is using their knowledge of money to compare prices of goods, and plan and budget for a party.

Nearly all pupils display excellent creative skills and use them effectively across a range of activities. Younger pupils develop their literacy skills through creative role-play, while older ones recreate and act a story using props and puppets. Nearly all pupils develop effective artistic skills and use a range of approaches well. For example, they use a variety of techniques and materials to create sea creatures.

Throughout the school, pupils make effective progress in developing and using their digital skills. During their time at the school, pupils of all ages use a wide range of technological equipment to advance their learning. They apply their digital skills at a level appropriate to their stage of development for a wide range of purposes. For example, pupils use computer-aided design software imaginatively to produce 3D models.

Few pupils make appropriate progress in learning Welsh. At the lower end of the school a few respond appropriately to class instructions and, by Year 2 most understand and speak simple phrases, such as expressing what they like and dislike and discussing the weather in simple terms. Most pupils maintain a positive attitude to speaking Welsh, but progress for most is inconsistent, with older pupils having a limited recall of simple sentence structures and relevant vocabulary.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are happy and feel safe at school. They are exceptionally well-behaved in the classrooms and around the school. They are very polite and welcoming, and treat each other, staff and visitors with respect and courtesy.

A strong feature of the school is the positive, caring working relationship that exists between adults and pupils. Nearly all pupils develop high levels of trust and appreciation for teachers and support staff. Pupils' support for one another is mature and thoughtful.

Nearly all pupils become healthy and confident individuals, and understand, for example, how to make healthy choices in relation to diet, physical activity, and emotional well-being, including how to keep themselves safe online. Nearly all pupils respond positively to opportunities to undertake a range of physical activities during lessons, breaks and lunchtimes, and through clubs and after school activities. For example, they take part in extracurricular climbing activities, and sports coaching.

Nearly all pupils concentrate well for extended periods. They are motivated to learn and show interest and resilience when tackling activities. They work with their peers in pairs or groups to solve problems without support from adults. As a result, many discuss their work confidently and listen to the views and ideas of others maturely. Many pupils display initiative and innovation to complete tasks successfully. For example, they enjoy taking part in enriched outdoor activities such as constructing wooden planters or building a nest out of natural materials to keep an egg safe. Most pupils use feedback from teachers and support staff to improve their learning, such as using more adjectives in their writing to make it more interesting to the reader.

Many pupils, including those with additional learning needs, and those who are eligible for free school meals take on leadership roles and responsibilities confidently. They play a full part in the life and work of the school, for example as members of the school council, or as sports ambassadors or digital ambassadors. These groups have influenced a range of aspects of school life, for example, healthy eating initiatives and on-line safety.

Nearly all pupils develop conscientiously as ethical, informed citizens. For example, many have recently taken part in a plastic pollution project, which highlighted the sustainability issues in their own coastal community.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school is working suitably towards developing a purpose-driven curriculum that matches the principles and ethos of the Curriculum for Wales. It has engaged governors, parents, staff and pupils in its development. Teachers listen to pupils' views on what they would like to learn and introduce these skilfully as challenges or 'Heriau Hwylus'.

Teachers provide a range of engaging learning experiences that promote pupils' creativity well through drama, art and music. The broad and balanced curriculum enables pupils to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) to ensure continuity and progression in their learning. At its best, teachers in a minority of classes enrich the curriculum by planning stimulating provision that inspire the pupils. For example, while learning about World War 2, pupils dressed as evacuees, created an Anderson Shelter, and re-enacted a scene during an air-raid. However, this practice of providing authentic learning experiences is not consistent across the school.

Educational trips and visitors to the school enhance provision across the curriculum. For example, there have recently been regular visits from a sports coach to support pupils' physical skills. By collaborating with external agencies, the school provides exciting and stimulating opportunities to develop lifelong learners. For example, collaborating with Swansea University on Project Siarc, helps to raise pupils' aspirations.

The school develops its curriculum effectively to encourage pupils to understand and celebrate the cultural diversity of Wales and the wider world. For example, by creating Peace Mala bracelets, pupils reflect on respecting people of all cultures. Teachers plan purposeful activities based on Welsh history and culture that engage the pupils well. For example, they have opportunities to learn about local artists and authors, enjoy opportunities to learn Welsh songs and celebrate Welsh Music Day with a picnic on the field. However, the quality of provision for the development of pupils' Welsh speaking skills is under-developed.

The school's provision for personal and social education develops pupils' understanding of their own well-being and that of others effectively. Teachers integrate aspects of diversity skilfully into their planning. For example, they encourage pupils to compare refugees with evacuees to develop a greater empathy for refugees moving to Wales from other parts of the world. Staff members provide stimulating extra-curricular activities to support pupils' well-being. For example, the school provides pupils with opportunities to relax, play board games and partake in craft activities in after-school clubs.

There is a supportive working relationship between staff and pupils across the school. Staff also work together effectively to meet the needs of all pupils by sharing ideas and assessing their progress. Staff have high expectations of all pupils and use effective and varied questioning skills to ensure that learning usually proceeds at a good pace. Teachers agree clear success criteria with pupils, which ensures that they all have a good understanding of what is expected of them. As a result, most pupils make good progress against their targets.

All members of staff manage pupil behaviour efficiently and treat all pupils equally and with appropriate respect. Staff develop a culture of positive support and inclusivity within every class. In most lessons, teachers explain activities and concepts clearly so that pupils engage enthusiastically in their tasks. Teachers make useful references to pupils' previous learning. They use a variety of different approaches to learning, such as play-based tasks, direct teaching, small group work and independent activities.

All members of staff provide pupils with helpful verbal feedback. In most classes, staff also provide pupils with written feedback that is usually positive but identifies

clearly how they can improve their work. Where appropriate, teachers provide some relevant opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own and their peers' learning. Teachers use the information from their assessments to feed into their planning. Although in its early stages, this is beginning to support pupils to improve their work and make progress in their learning.

Care, support and guidance

All members of staff work purposefully together to create a caring community and a safe learning environment for pupils and adults. The school ensures that the health and well-being of all pupils is a constant priority. It provides them with a variety of opportunities to keep fit and teachers them about the importance of eating and drinking healthily. The school's safeguarding culture and arrangements to keep pupils safe meet requirements and give no cause for concern. The school has appropriate procedures to monitor pupils' attendance. It works effectively with welfare agencies to promote good attendance.

Staff promote pupils' sense of belonging to their local community appropriately by taking advantage of a range of exciting opportunities to draw upon the culture of Wales and the local area. They often plan visits to Laugharne castle and Dylan Thomas' boathouse, for example.

All staff support pupils to develop a strong awareness of the school values and, as a result, nearly all pupils have developed respect, understanding and tolerance for others. Adults ensure that pupils consider values such as honesty, sustainability, and respect regularly through a varied curriculum.

The school provides pupils with suitable opportunities to take part in performances and events, both individually and in groups. This improves their self-confidence and expressive skills, their readiness to contribute creative ideas, and work collaboratively as part of a team. For example, they have participated recently in Cwis Dim Clem and sung in St David's Cathedral during their recent visit. The school offers pupils exciting opportunities to get involved in the arts, sport, and leisure. Staff encourage them to take part in team sports such as netball and cricket and many have represented the school in doing so. They also benefit from taking part in the Urdd Eisteddfod. The school encourages all pupils to take on responsibilities and contribute to the life of the school and wider community. All pupil voice committees are inclusive and include members from across the school.

The school promotes the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of pupils well. Pupils have useful opportunities to learn about right and wrong, the importance of helping others and understanding the beliefs and traditions of people from different backgrounds. There are designated reflection areas throughout the school for pupils to consider their actions during the day. Using these has a calming effect on pupils and helps them to develop their emotional resilience.

Under the recently established leadership structure, the school has ensured that it has robust procedures to identify pupils' additional learning needs and monitor the impact of regular interventions thoroughly. There is swift identification and support for pupils with ALN and tailored provision to meet their individual needs in the classroom and in support groups. The school provides a wide range of beneficial support to help pupils emotionally and in their learning. For example, pupils experience the calming

effect of play therapy and have access to the sensory room where staff support pupils with emotional and behavioural needs well.

The school works successfully with parents, and a range of external agencies to address the needs of the pupils. These include, for example, speech and language specialists, educational psychologists, and medical practitioners. These support the staff to improve the provision for specific pupils. The revised tracking processes for measuring the progress and development of all pupils, including those with ALN, is beginning to have a positive effect on provision and understanding of specific pupil needs. However, as they are relatively new, these developments are not sufficiently embedded into school practice.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has been absent from school for several months which has meant an interim change in leadership. The interim leadership team is mainly the acting head teacher who is supported effectively by the school's inspirational local authority education support adviser. Together, they have worked successfully to revise policies and procedures, and restore relationships, within the school and between the school and the parents. This has ensured that the school is an effective learning community for pupils and staff.

Leaders have a clear vision and appropriate strategic objectives, plans and policies for the school. These ensure that staff provide activities that meet the needs of all pupils, so they achieve at least in line with expectations for their stage of development, whatever their background and ability. There is also a clear focus on supporting pupils with additional learning needs, and improving staff and pupil well-being.

Leaders set high expectations for staff, pupils, and themselves, and develop an effective, engaged team of teachers and support staff. They ensure that staff at all levels understand and carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. They model and promote values and professional behaviour that contribute positively to improving the school and ensuring that staff work successfully as a team. They manage staff performance well to improve their practice.

Governors understand their roles well and carry out their responsibilities conscientiously and successfully. They contribute purposefully to setting the school's strategic priorities and have a clear understanding of the provision, and the standards of learning. They do this by undertaking regular learning walks, listening to learners, scrutinising their work, and talking to staff. They provide leaders with an appropriate balance of support and challenge, and hold them to account on behalf of the local community in their role as critical friends. Governors ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Over the last few months, leaders have refined their procedures to identify correctly the school's current strengths and areas for improvement. They have comprehensive development plans with clear and relevant priorities based on the outcomes of effective self-evaluation. Leaders monitor and evaluate progress against these priorities appropriately and adjust their methods to achieve the best outcomes. The improvement processes, together with the robust tracking procedures, provide leaders with a clear focus on identifying the impact of provision on pupils' learning and well-being, whatever their backgrounds and abilities. As a result, in a relatively

short time there have been clear improvements in pupils' writing and their application of numeracy, which demonstrates that this approach is successful.

Leaders address national and local priorities well. These include systems for keeping pupils safe, reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment, preparing to implement the Curriculum for Wales, and refining provision for pupils with ALN. Leaders also focus directly on developing pupils' literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. Improving pupils' Welsh language skills is also one of the school's identified priorities, but this is at an early stage of development.

The school manages its finances efficiently and deploys them sensibly in line with its development priorities. This includes the pupil development grant which has been used wisely to minimise the effect of poverty on pupils.

Leaders focus well on building positive relationships with parents. They ensure that they have effective lines of communication with them so they can raise any issues that may affect their child's learning and well-being.

There is a positive culture and ethos to promote and support the professional learning of all staff. This links clearly to the school's development priorities and the professional needs of the staff. Leaders keep a detailed account of the professional learning activities attended by staff but the impact of these on improving learning is not always clear enough. Leaders encourage staff to collaborate with those at a neighbouring school in developing strategies to improve writing, for example. They have also started to share and develop professional practice in joint staff meetings and presentations.

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

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