

A report on

Ysgol Derwen

**Main Road
Higher Kinnerton
Flintshire
CH4 9AJ**

Date of inspection: February 2026

by

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

About Ysgol Derwen

Name of provider	Ysgol Derwen
Local authority	Flintshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	187
Pupils of statutory school age	138
Number in nursery classes	24
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 21.7%)	7.1%
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 9.2%)	*
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2008

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	23/10/2023
Start date of inspection	02/02/2026

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.

Summary

Ysgol Derwen is a welcoming and vibrant school, where leaders implement a clear vision for the learning and well-being of all pupils. They have established an inclusive community ethos, where staff, pupils and their families feel valued and respected. Leaders focus well on securing effective teaching and learning, which results in nearly all pupils making strong progress.

Staff nurture caring relationships with pupils and encourage them to be responsible and kind. Leaders implement robust systems to identify pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and work well with other agencies and parents, to ensure they receive any specialist provision they require. Throughout the school pupils' behaviour is exemplary.

Across the school, teaching is effective. From an early age, staff encourage all pupils to develop their independence successfully. They organise environments thoughtfully to enable pupils to access helpful resources without support and share useful strategies for them to use if they find something difficult. Consequently, most pupils show high levels of independence in their learning.

Leaders and staff have developed a highly engaging curriculum. They plan purposeful opportunities for pupils to influence what and how they learn which motivates them successfully and makes learning meaningful. This work is particularly effective in numeracy, where pupils regularly plan and explore their own investigations.

The school places a firm focus on enhancing the development of pupils' literacy skills. Staff model language well and support pupils' speaking and listening skills successfully. This ensures pupils build particularly strong oracy skills. Staff teach reading effectively and give pupils access to a wide range of stimulating reading material to inspire them to read regularly. This contributes significantly to many pupils becoming keen book lovers who read with confidence and understanding.

Teachers plan regular Welsh language sessions across the school. However, in general, they do not place a strong enough emphasis on promoting the Welsh language or teaching pupils about the history and culture of Wales.

Senior leaders work successfully with staff and governors to evaluate the school's work. This contributes to their secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. A few teachers are starting to improve their leadership skills although, overall, distributed leadership is at an early stage of development.

Recommendations

We have made two recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Establish effective distributed leadership across the school

- R2 Ensure staff promote the Welsh language and teach pupils about the history and culture of Wales effectively

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Ysgol Derwen is a welcoming and vibrant school, where leaders and staff implement a clear vision for the learning and well-being of all pupils. Through highly committed, thoughtful leadership, the headteacher has established a caring, inclusive culture, where pupils feel safe, listened to, and thoroughly enjoy being at school. An effective focus on ensuring successful teaching results in nearly all pupils making strong progress and developing as confident learners. This includes pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those with additional learning needs (ALN).

Senior leaders are approachable and place a firm focus on building a collaborative team ethos across the school. Staff nurture caring relationships with pupils and encourage them to be responsible and kind. Nearly all pupils respond well to this and across the school behaviour is exemplary.

The school has established a highly engaging broad and balanced curriculum. There is a wide range of authentic and enjoyable learning experiences which pupils talk about with enthusiasm. Provision to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Teachers encourage pupils to appreciate the natural world in the school's outdoor environment such as when they plant trees or learn about the local wildlife. Staff provide purposeful ongoing opportunities for pupils to influence what and how they learn which motivates them well and makes learning meaningful. This work is particularly successful in mathematics and numeracy.

Spotlight: Effective provision for mathematics and numeracy

The teaching of mathematics and numeracy is effective throughout the school and pupils make strong progress in this area. Staff provide a beneficial range of provision which enhances younger pupils' early understanding of mathematical concepts such as shape and measures successfully through their play. Nearly all younger pupils develop a secure understanding of number through a range of engaging practical experiences. Staff support pupils of all ages to apply their numeracy skills confidently across a variety of purposeful pupil led investigations. Older pupils use their numeracy skills particularly well as they explore a range of increasingly complex problems.

Across the school, teachers use a range of questions to check pupils' understanding and extend their thinking effectively. They routinely provide pupils with beneficial feedback which helps them know what they have done well and what they could improve. They revisit key points regularly and address pupils' misconceptions swiftly. Learning support assistants reinforce learning successfully and make a strong contribution to pupils'

progress. Throughout the school staff have high expectations of pupils and encourage them to be reflective independent learners.

Spotlight: Developing pupils' independent skills

From an early age, staff encourage all pupils to be highly independent in their learning. They organise environments carefully to enable pupils to access helpful resources without support and share useful strategies for pupils to use if they find something difficult. Staff take account of pupils' interests and encourage them to develop their individual ideas and creativity. They routinely encourage pupils to reflect on their work and help each other when needed. Consequently, throughout the school, most pupils show high levels of independence and engagement in their learning.

The school places a firm focus on enhancing pupils' literacy skills. Throughout the school, staff model language well and support pupils' speaking and listening skills successfully. This ensures pupils gain exceptionally strong oracy skills. They talk confidently to each other and adults and use a wide range of subject specific vocabulary accurately in a variety of contexts.

The teaching of reading is effective, and staff give pupils access to a wide range of stimulating reading material to inspire them to read regularly. This contributes significantly to many pupils becoming keen book lovers who read with confidence and understanding. Most pupils use their reading skills well to assist their learning across the curriculum. As they move through the school, pupils develop their writing skills successfully. Many younger pupils write in short sentences, applying their phonic knowledge effectively when attempting to spell irregular words. Older pupils organise and develop their ideas well when writing for a range of purposes.

Teachers plan regular Welsh language sessions across the school. The youngest pupils enjoy singing songs in Welsh and are beginning to understand some familiar vocabulary and sentence patterns. As they move through the school, the development of pupils' Welsh oracy skills is too inconsistent. In general, staff do not place a strong enough emphasis on promoting the Welsh language or teaching pupils about the history and culture of Wales.

Across the school, staff support pupils with ALN to make good progress and participate fully in the life of the school. Leaders have developed helpful systems to ensure the early identification of ALN. Staff meet with parents and external agencies regularly to review provision and monitor their progress. This ensures that they meet pupils' individual needs well.

Senior leaders work with staff and governors to evaluate the school's work successfully. This contributes to their secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Professional learning opportunities for staff, such as those focusing on the development of ALN provision and foundation learning, have had a positive impact on pupils' progress.

Leaders allocate areas of responsibility to a majority of staff. These include aspects of the school development plan. A few teachers are starting to improve their leadership skills through a middle leadership programme. However, overall, distributed leadership is at an early stage of development.

Most parents and carers are very supportive of the school and value the welcoming community ethos. They appreciate the care and commitment shown by staff and feel that leaders listen and respond to their views effectively.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for site management do not give any cause for concern.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. ‘*most pupils...*’ or ‘*very few pupils...*’. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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.

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