



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Fairholme Preparatory School
The Mount
Mount Road
St Asaph
Denbighshire
LL17 0DH**

Date of inspection: December 2012

by

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



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with section 163 of the Education Act 2002. The main purpose of inspection under this section is to report on compliance with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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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Context

Fairholme Preparatory School is an independent primary school in St. Asaph in Denbighshire for boys and girls aged three to 11 years old. The school was founded in 1900 and moved to its present site in 1964. The current proprietors have been at the school since 2009.

There are 111 pupils on roll, 24 of whom are in the nursery and reception classes. Most pupils live in the local area. A few pupils travel from surrounding rural areas and from as far as Holywell and Colwyn Bay. There are 10 full-time teachers, three part-time teachers, and two full-time support staff.

English is the predominant language of most pupils. Around 14% of pupils speak other languages at home. Approximately 28% of pupils are from minority ethnic groups.

The school reports that no pupils are socially disadvantaged. Around 2% of pupils receive additional learning support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs.

As part of its admission procedures, the school will normally offer a place for all three-year-olds. Pupils joining at a later age are invited, along with their parents, to meet the principal for an informal interview. Depending on age, they can subsequently visit the school for a taster day during which the form teacher will assess the child's abilities. Following a discussion with parents, and subject to the satisfaction of both parties, a place will be offered.

The school was last inspected in 2005.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

The school's current performance is good because:

- most pupils make good progress and achieve highly;
- standards of pupils' wellbeing are high, especially their manners and behaviour;
- the quality of care, support and guidance for pupils is strong;
- pupils benefit from the outstanding range of enrichment clubs; and
- the learning environment supports pupils' learning well.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because:

- the principal has a clear vision for the school's future development;
- recent improvements in the quality of provision have led to higher standards, particularly in spelling and pupils' information and communication technology skills; and
- there are suitable systems and procedures to identify areas for development and support improvement planning.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets most/almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- have regard to National Assembly guidance on health and safety responsibilities and powers of schools – install fire door to kitchen (3.5).

The suitability of proprietors and staff

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The provision of information

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Recommendations

- R1 Comply fully with the regulations for registration
- R2 Ensure that learning activities challenge the most able pupils to achieve their potential
- R3 Develop the role of middle managers in self-evaluation and improvement planning
- R4 Develop suitable success criteria to measure the impact of improvement initiatives

What happens next?

Since the inspection report notes that the school does not meet one or more of the standards required for registration, the National Assembly for Wales will require the proprietor to submit an action plan within a specified period of time. This plan must set out the steps that the school will take to meet the standards, and the timescale within which it will complete each step.

Estyn advises the proprietor to amend the current development plan to show what action the school intends to take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents at the school.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Across the school, most pupils make good progress and achieve high standards. Over the last three years, many pupils, at age 11, have transferred to the high school of their choice. The figure for 2012 was 96%. Several pupils obtain academic, music or drama scholarships at other independent schools.

Almost all pupils in the school listen well, speak clearly and with confidence and use a well-developed vocabulary for their age. Older pupils listen carefully to questions, respond maturely, justify their opinions with evidence and explain their answers well.

Most pupils in the lower school read well and have positive attitudes to reading. By the time they reach the upper school they read fluently and use phonic skills well to build new words. They have a particularly good understanding of what they reading.

In the upper school, nearly all pupils read confidently and with good expression. Many are avid readers. They discuss the meaning of texts well. They make sensible predictions of what they expect to happen next in a story, talk thoughtfully about favourite characters and authors and skim quickly over a text to gain a secure idea of its meaning.

In the lower school, nearly all pupils make very good progress developing their writing skills. Handwriting is neat with well-formed letters and careful presentation. Most pupils use punctuation accurately. They spell common words correctly and use a range of effective strategies to build-up new words. Many pupils produce extended pieces of writing and organise their thoughts well.

Most pupils in the upper school write well using a good range of interesting and lively vocabulary. Their spelling is generally correct and their work is appropriately punctuated and particularly well presented. Many pupils show a good appreciation of different styles of writing and match the style of their writing appropriately to different audiences. Almost all pupils develop their literacy skills well across the curriculum. However, many pupils do not check their work consistently enough to correct errors.

Most pupils achieve high standards in mathematics. Their understanding and use of number is particularly good and they make strong progress as they move through the school. However, generally pupils do not apply their numeracy skills consistently in other subjects. Pupils' understanding and use of information and communication technology is good.

There is little difference in the performance of boys and girls. Almost all pupils who speak English as an additional language make very good progress, especially in their reading. Pupils who receive extra support with their learning consistently meet their targets. However, the most able pupils do not always achieve as well as they might.

Wellbeing: Good

Pupils' wellbeing is a particular strength of the school. Pupils are proud of their school and are members of a friendly and supportive community, where relationships between pupils of all ages are extremely positive.

Almost all pupils have a secure understanding of how they become healthy, both through what they eat and the physical activities they undertake. They behave extremely well in class and around the school. Pupils are exceptionally polite, considerate and courteous to both adults and their peers.

Nearly all pupils have a very positive attitude towards their learning and are well motivated, interested and engaged in their work. Most pupils sustain concentration throughout their lessons.

The school council plays an effective role in the life of the school. Initiatives such as the fruit tuck shop and a mentoring system, where older pupils help and support younger ones, have had a positive impact on the pupils' wellbeing. Many older pupils take on additional responsibility, for example as mentors, house captains and road-safety officers. However, pupils have a limited influence over how or what they learn.

Pupils play an appropriate part in the life of the local community such as attending Remembrance Services, visiting old peoples' homes and attending services at the cathedral. They take part regularly in school charity activities and raise money successfully for their chosen causes.

Attendance is very good. Most pupils are punctual to school and lessons.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The curriculum meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. It provides pupils with a wide range of interesting learning experiences across a broad range of subjects. Detailed schemes of work for each subject provide continuity in pupils' learning as they move through the school. The programme for younger pupils is based appropriately on the foundation stage of learning. There is a good range of out-of-school visits that enhances pupils' experiences and contributes well to their learning. These include theatre trips and visits to places of educational interest.

There is an outstanding range of enrichment clubs that take place after school and during break times. These have a very significant impact on the progress pupils make, for instance, in sport and music. The school makes very good use of a range of specialist teachers to provide additional opportunities for pupils to take part in activities such as drama and ballet.

There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and information and communication technology skills in subjects across the curriculum. Although the

school plans appropriately for pupils to use their numeracy skills in a range of subjects, the actual activities do not take enough account of pupils' mathematical ability.

Teaching: Good

In all lessons, teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and have good working relationships that promote learning successfully.

In many lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils, conduct lessons at a lively pace, and use a range of teaching approaches that interest and engage pupils well. Lessons are planned effectively, build successfully on what pupils already know and make good use of resources available. Teachers generally use a range of effective questioning that encourages pupils to think about their work. They make good use of additional staff to help pupils who need extra support with their learning. Homework tasks reinforce learning well.

In the few lessons that have shortcomings, teachers do not always challenge the most able pupils well enough. Learning activities do not extend these pupils' thinking sufficiently or provide suitable opportunities for them to solve more difficult problems.

Teachers use an extensive range of assessment approaches to monitor pupils' progress. Many assessments focus on the progress pupils are making in developing their literacy and mathematics skills. Teachers use this information effectively, particularly to identify those pupils who need extra support or those who are underachieving.

During lessons, teachers provide useful oral feedback to pupils that help them know what to do to improve their work. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and thoroughly. In the best practice, teachers' marking provides clear advice on what pupils could do next. Older pupils are fully involved in setting their weekly targets for improvement in literacy, mathematics and personal development.

Parents receive two reports each year that provide them with detailed information on their child's progress. There are also regular opportunities for parents to meet teachers to discuss the progress their child is making.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. It is a close, caring family community where staff promote high standards of behaviour and manners, and encourage successfully pupils to take on responsibility. There are effective arrangements to support pupils' health and wellbeing with regular opportunities for pupils to be active throughout the school day. Opportunities for pupils to become independent learners are developing well.

The school has effective links with a range of specialist services that provide good support and guidance for pupils. For example, the school nurse and community police officer are involved successfully in the delivery of topics such as sex education and substance misuse.

Support for pupils with additional learning needs is good. The school identifies pupils' needs at an early stage. Individual pupil plans, provided for pupils with additional needs, have clear targets for improvement and are reviewed regularly.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements although some minor issues were brought to the attention of the proprietors.

Learning environment: Good

The school has a strong inclusive ethos where all pupils are valued and have equal access to the curriculum. There is a clear emphasis on recognising, respecting and celebrating diversity.

There are enough books and resources to meet pupils' needs. Staff make good use of these resources to support pupils' learning. The recently purchased equipment for information and communication technology has had a positive impact on the standards pupils achieve in this area.

The current principals have made significant improvements to the school accommodation over the past three years. These improvements, including the new classrooms and all-weather sports pitch, have had a positive impact on pupils' standards and wellbeing. The premises are well maintained and buildings are secure.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

The principals have been successful in establishing a shared vision for the school based on high expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour, but also in developing pupils' wider skills and talents. This shared vision is summed up appropriately in the school's mission statement, "For learning, friendship, ambition and discovery". Staff are challenged positively and supported well to improve their practice to meet this aim.

The principals are strongly committed to providing pupils with the best possible opportunities for learning in a well-resourced and attractive environment. This commitment has led to significant improvements in the school's sports facilities and information and communication technology resources.

Members of the recently introduced senior management team are clear about their roles and responsibilities and carry these out effectively. Subject leaders undertake their roles conscientiously and have appropriate understanding of their subjects. However, leaders at this level do not contribute sufficiently to identifying areas for development and to improvement planning.

The principals have a dual role within the school as they are also the school's proprietors. As proprietors, they generally fulfil their statutory obligations appropriately and take full account of relevant legislation and guidance.

The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The school meets almost all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Improving quality: Good

The principals have established sound self-evaluation arrangements that draw upon a wide range of first-hand evidence. They are clear about what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve.

The principals use data effectively at individual pupil level to measure pupils' progress and identify those who require additional support. They use data less effectively to identify the progress of groups or cohorts of pupils or to identify whole-school issues.

The school has been successful in implementing an appropriate range of initiatives to improve the quality of provision and raise standards. Action taken has improved pupils' spelling, information and communication technology skills and physical skills. The school has also made significant improvements to the physical environment, both indoors and outdoors, and strengthened communication with parents.

The school's integrated development plan is reasonably detailed with clear time scales. It also manages cost well. However, the plan does not include clear success criteria for its actions. This means that it is difficult for leaders to judge accurately the impact, particularly on pupils' standards and their wellbeing, of the actions that have been taken.

There are appropriate arrangements in place for staff to share good practice and develop their professional expertise. For example, in-house training in the use of computers and inter-active whiteboards has increased staff confidence in their use as a tool to support learning.

Partnership working: Good

The school has well-established links with a range of external organisations and other partners. These partnerships extend learning experiences, support pupils' personal and social development and impact positively on their wellbeing. For example, the school has strong links with a local church and pupils perform at the cathedral twice a year. Pupils are involved in local events such as Remembrance Services and the designing and the opening of the obelisk in St Asaph. Pupils also support a range of local and national charities.

The school works closely in partnership with parents. There is good liaison and communication with parents who are very supportive of the school. Parents are kept up-to-date through detailed half-termly newsletters and the informative school website.

The school has effective partnerships with other local independent high schools that help ensure the smooth transition of form VII pupils into secondary education.

Resource management: Good

The school makes good use of its available resources. The budget is well managed and teaching and non-teaching staff are deployed effectively to support pupils' learning. There are suitable arrangements to support staff development that take appropriate account of whole-school priorities.

The funding of specialist teaching has impacted positively upon pupils' standards. For example, specialist teaching in physical education and games has improved pupil's physical skills and understanding.

In view of the good standards achieved by most pupils and the quality of provision, the school provides value for money.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to learner questionnaires

Sixty learners responded to the questionnaire. Inspectors also talked to groups of learners across the school. Their views are similar to those of learners nationally.

Almost all learners feel safe in school and believe that the school deals well with any bullying. They are confident of who to talk to if worried or upset and feel they get plenty of regular exercise. They think they are doing well in school, that teachers give them good help and homework is valuable. Many learners think that other learners behave well in lessons, and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Responses to parent questionnaires

Twenty-two parents attended the parents meeting and 32 parents responded to the questionnaires. In almost all cases, their views about the school were more positive than national norms.

In particular, almost all parents believe their child likes school, behaves well and is making good progress. All parents who responded to the survey state that the school is well run, teaching is good and staff expect pupils to work hard. Almost all parents feel they are well informed and the school prepares pupils well for high school.

Appendix 2

The inspection team

Richard Hawkley	Reporting Inspector
Bev Jenkins	Team Inspector
Linda Williams	Team Inspector
Judith Ashill	Peer Inspector
Paul Scudamore	Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003: 3 and 5
Elizabeth Perkins	School Nominee

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk)

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

Year groups, the Foundation Phase and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

Glossary of terms

Core subject indicator (CSI)	This relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum.
Level 1	This represents the equivalent of a GCSE at grade D to G.
Level 1 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade D to G.
Level 2	This represents the equivalent of a GCSE at grade A* to C.
Level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C including English or Welsh first language and mathematics
Level 2 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C.
Level 3	This represents the equivalent of an A level at grade A*-E.
Level 3 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to two A levels at grade A* to E.
Average wider points score	This includes all qualifications approved for use in Wales at the relevant age, for example at aged 16 or at aged 18.
Capped wider points score	This includes the best eight results from all qualifications approved for use in Wales at aged 16.
Proprietor	The term 'proprietor', as defined in the Education Act 1996, means the person or people responsible for managing an independent school and can include a sole proprietor, governing bodies, trustees or directors. The ways that independent schools are governed and owned varies a great deal. A proprietor or trust may own a school or the school may have a governing body that appoints a headteacher. Some schools have a combination of these.