



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

A report on

**Mountain Lane C.P. School
Knowle Lane
Buckley
Flintshire
CH7 3JA**

Date of inspection: July 2018

by

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

About Mountain Lane C.P. School

The school is situated in Buckley, in Flintshire local authority. There are currently 460 pupils on roll aged 3 to 11 years, organised into 14 single-aged classes, plus one part-time nursery class.

Most pupils speak English at home. Around 6% of the school's pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average of 19%. The school identifies 18% of pupils as having additional learning needs, which is slightly lower than the national average of 21%.

The Headteacher has been in post since September 2008. Estyn last inspected the school in March 2011.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

The school provides a friendly, nurturing environment that enables nearly all pupils to feel happy and safe, and to enjoy learning. Working relationships between adults and pupils are respectful throughout all year groups. Most pupils make good progress in learning and apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills well across the curriculum. By the end of Year 6, pupils apply their thinking skills to a high standard. There is a strong Welsh ethos in the school and pupils enjoy using the language both in lessons and in informal situations.

Interesting topics and stimulating teaching motivate pupils and generally develop their independent learning skills well.

The headteacher has a clear vision that promotes a commitment to excellence strongly. She is supported well by the senior management team and staff. Leadership responsibilities and governor roles, are distributed very effectively to bring about improvements. The governing body is proactive and supports and challenges the school successfully.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen opportunities for pupils to make choices about their learning and to work independently
- R2 Implement the principles and practice of the foundation phase more consistently
- R3 Strengthen processes for self-evaluation and improvement planning to evaluate the impact on areas most in need of development
- R4 Sharpen systems for tracking pupils' progress

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

Nearly all pupils start school with skills and knowledge around or above the expected level for their age. During their time at the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make good progress in their learning. This is particularly strong in the development of their oracy skills, both in English and Welsh and in the application of their numeracy skills.

Most pupils across the school listen attentively and talk enthusiastically about their work to visitors, using a wide range of vocabulary. By the end of key stage 2, nearly all pupils are articulate and speak with maturity in a range of situations, using extended vocabulary. Pupils' speaking skills in Welsh are developing well in the foundation phase. Many listen and respond to instructions and use simple greetings and phrases confidently. There is clear progression across the school as they build on the number and complexity of the language patterns they use. By Year 6, many pupils extend their sentences successfully when explaining their likes and dislikes and discussing their hobbies.

Most pupils use a range of taught strategies well to interpret the meaning of text. Younger pupils make good use of their knowledge of letter sounds to work out new and unfamiliar words. By Year 6 nearly all pupils use higher order reading skills, such as skimming and scanning well, when searching for information about topics.

Across the school, most pupils develop their writing skills well for a wide range of purposes across the curriculum. Many younger foundation phase pupils enjoy making marks outside with chalk and responding to a party invitation to the 'Ugly Bug Ball'. However, on occasions over direction from adults inhibits pupils' independent emergent writing. Older foundation phase pupils demonstrate imaginative ideas that engage the reader successfully. Examples include when using similes to write a poem about aliens, describing them as 'slimy as a snail', writing an engaging account of their trip to the beach and making up imaginative rhyming poems about the seaside. Most pupils' writing skills continue to develop well during key stage 2. Most present their work neatly and adapt their style of writing effectively. They draft and refine their work well, following useful feedback, and explain the improvements they make clearly. As a result, pupils' written work is of good quality, as seen in their emotive letters from a soldier during the war, and when describing a scene in vivid detail, linked to the story *Carrie's War*.

Across the school, most pupils, whatever their ability, respond positively to activities that encourage them to develop their problem solving skills. For example, Year 6 pupils apply their thinking skills effectively when working out the number of paving slabs needed to go around a pond as it increases in size. More able Year 6 pupils work at a high level of challenge as they create their own algebraic formula to solve this. In the foundation phase, most pupils make solid progress in their mathematical development. They have effective number skills, and a sound grasp of shape and data, and apply these skills confidently in a variety of contexts across the curriculum. For example, when completing a tally chart about how many pupils visit Anglesey, their mode of transport, and the sites visited. They use this data to create an

accurate bar graph depicting their results. Many Year 1 and Year 2 pupils apply their knowledge of addition and subtraction well when handling money to buy or sell goods in the castle and beach role-play shops. By the end of key stage 2, the standard of most pupils' mathematics skills is very strong and they transfer these skills effectively to other subjects. In Year 6, pupils use online maps to look at distances between football stadiums as part of their 1960s topic. They apply their thinking skills to a high standard to look at stadium capacity, working out the mean, median and mode accurately.

Most pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are good across the school. In the foundation phase, many pupils add captions to stories and use a simple paint programme to draw the Three Little Pigs' houses, with growing independence. Older foundation phase pupils log on to the school's virtual learning environment, access a range of programs and record and upload aspects of their work that they are particularly proud of, with support. In key stage 2, pupils use a broad range of programs and applications to enhance their work. For example, older pupils use a stop motion technique confidently to recreate a Beatles pop video, linked to their 1960s topic. Older pupils are proficient at searching for information. They create and interrogate databases to handle information confidently, when they input data on the weather in South Africa, and create animal classification keys as part of their science work.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils behave exceptionally well when moving around the school. They treat each other and adults with respect. They play very well together at playtimes and lunchtimes, sharing the space fairly. Older pupils engage co-operatively in team games, such as football, for extended periods of time.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school. They know who to go to if they are worried and feel confident that any concerns raised will be listened to and dealt with, promptly. Nearly all pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep safe online. The pupil e-cadets provide valuable support, particularly for younger pupils, by talking to them about e-safety.

Many pupils readily take on leadership roles in a wide variety of pupil led groups, such as 'Cryw Cymraeg', e-cadets, charities councils, eco-council and the playtime buddies 'Owlets'. These help pupils to develop their understanding of how committees work, as they take on the role of chair and secretary, with support from school staff. This develops their understanding of responsibility effectively. A charities committee shares ideas for raising money and successfully raises notable funds for several charities. However, across the school, pupils do not always make decisions that influence their activities consistently enough.

Nearly all pupils are ready to learn at the beginning of lessons and work effectively with their peers, respecting the views of others. Many older key stage 2 pupils show resilience when facing challenges, particularly when solving problems. However, many pupils across the school are only just beginning to make independent decisions about their own learning. On occasions pupils lose focus when learning is overly adult directed for extended periods.

When given the opportunity to make decisions about their work, most pupils make sensible choices and enjoy the opportunity to extend their learning, for example when choosing a famous person to study as part of their topic. Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to learning and feel that their views are valued.

Nearly all pupils have a very good understanding of keeping themselves healthy. Pupils in the reception class enjoy washing the plastic fruit in the water tray before using it in the role-play 'café', saying 'you need to wash fruit before you eat it because it might have bugs on it.' Nearly all pupils actively take part in regular exercise, which helps them to understand the benefits of physical activity in keeping healthy. Many take part in a broad range of school clubs that benefits them physically and contributes effectively to their general wellbeing.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The quality of teaching is good overall. Most teachers have high expectations of their pupils and manage behaviour calmly and treat pupils with respect. Together with support staff, they build strong working relationships with pupils. This creates a positive and purposeful working atmosphere in the school. Where teaching is particularly effective, staff use a range of interesting approaches and strategies to engage pupils. In these classes, lessons are often practical, and encourage independent learning successfully. In the best examples, teachers find out what pupils want to learn. They adapt classroom experiences accordingly to provide opportunities for pupils to extend and deepen their knowledge independently. Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to make choices about how and what they learn. On these occasions adults overly direct learning which reduces pupils' rate of progress. Beneficial trips to places linked to curriculum topics such as Blist Hill and Erddig, and visits from artists and authors, further enrich pupils' learning experiences.

In the foundation phase, teachers provide many beneficial opportunities for pupils to learn through carefully planned adult directed activities, with a strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers have recently adapted the curriculum to ensure more continuity in developing independent learners. For example, the use of 'sparkle time' in Year 1 and Year 2, provides stimulating learning opportunities where pupils' ideas inform activities in the enhanced provision. As a result, pupils practise their skills and follow their interests more independently and enthusiastically. The use of outdoor learning for older foundation phase pupils is at an early stage of development and is beginning to improve pupils' independent thinking skills. However, on occasions planned investigations and learning activities are too narrow and prescriptive.

There is a strong focus throughout the school on developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills systematically. The school has considered the digital competency framework carefully to strengthen its provision. As a result, there is a broad range of opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills purposefully. For example, key stage 2 pupils use coding well to enable a tiny programmable device, to act as a dice, randomly selecting a number from one to six when shaken. Provision to develop pupils' numerical skills is highly successful. In particular, the school's arrangements to develop pupils' reasoning skills are strong.

During lessons, most teachers provide useful feedback to help pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. They use praise well to motivate pupils and support their progress. There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own learning and to identify their next steps for improvement. This develops pupils' confidence to learn from their mistakes.

There is a strong Welsh ethos in the school. The Welsh language has a prominent place on displays and there are regular opportunities for pupils to hear and use simple Welsh phrases throughout the school day as part of their daily routines. Regular Welsh lessons help pupils of all ages to understand the importance of learning Welsh. In addition, teachers and the 'Cryw Cymraeg' ensure that there are enough opportunities for pupils to practise their Welsh in informal situations. This fosters pupils' enjoyment of the language successfully. The study of the work of several Welsh artists and musicians, such as Janet Bell, develops pupils' understanding of Welsh culture well.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a very happy and caring community that nurtures pupils well, while building their confidence and self-esteem effectively. Positive behaviour strategies secure high standards of politeness and mutual respect.

The school provides useful support to parents to help them support their child's learning at home. For example, the school provides parents with strategies that they can use to develop their child's phonic awareness, and improve their spelling and reading skills successfully. The school's regular use of social media to update parents about their child's learning experiences, achievements and the daily life of the school is a positive feature that they appreciate.

Provision to develop pupils' creative work is particularly effective, culminating in work of a high standard. Pupils' use of detailed sketches compliments their writing or topic work effectively. Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to study different artistic styles by reviewing the work of famous Welsh artists, such as Sir Kyffin Williams.

The school promotes pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe very effectively and has appropriate arrangements for healthy eating and drinking. Teachers provide worthwhile opportunities to support pupils in making healthy lifestyle choices. For example, Year 2 pupils successfully investigate how much sugar is contained in a range of drinks. The school provides pupils with a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and engages regularly in inter-school sporting competitions, such as football, cricket, rugby, summer fitness and athletics. This promotes pupils' awareness of the importance of keeping fit well.

There are beneficial partnerships with the local and wider community. For example, a visit by the author Matt Brown, inspired pupils to formulate their own creative story books to raise money for their sponsored charity Nightingale House.

The school provides pupils with valuable opportunities to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural skills. An assembly on perseverance encourages pupils to reflect and consider the personal qualities needed to be resilient and confident.

Teachers encourage pupils to be responsible citizens who are willing to help others. The school's work within the community contributes effectively towards this, such as when the school choir sings at a local nursing home and at the church.

The monitoring of pupil progress and the development of effective systems to track pupil performance is at an early stage of development. Current processes do not always focus sharply enough on informing the next steps in pupils' learning. The school provides beneficial support in class, and where appropriate, bespoke withdrawal support for individual pupils with additional learning needs. A team of committed teaching assistants provide valuable support to vulnerable pupils, ensuring they are well cared for and that they progress well towards their targets. Individual education plans are clear and written in partnership with staff, parents and, where appropriate, specialist services.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher, supported ably by the senior leadership team, creates a strong and clear vision that promotes a commitment to excellence, with a clear focus on achieving high standards. The whole school community shares this vision regularly in assemblies and as 'hashtags' in social media messages. Leadership responsibilities, and governor roles and responsibilities, are distributed effectively. This is a strength of the school. Staff and governors form 'learning communities' in order to accomplish specific activities successfully. A good example is the way in which the school responded to parental questionnaires and pupil representatives who felt that the house point system had become ineffective. Staff and pupils came together to look at an approach that encouraged both individuals and teams to succeed in school and reward them appropriately for doing so. The 'Tocynnau Enfys' system is now well embedded and provides a clear, consistent system that is understood by all, and has had a positive impact on behaviour.

Governors receive useful information about aspects of leadership, provision and pupils' standards, through regular reports. They take an active interest in the school and visit regularly to take part in learning walks to observe the staff and pupils at work and to keep progress against improvement priorities under review. Governors are proactive in wanting to bring about improvements and produce valuable reports following these visits to add to the school's self-evaluation evidence. Pupil representatives attend governor meetings regularly to show how spending on resources improves their skills. For example, pupils demonstrated their advanced ICT skills, using the equipment recently purchased for the school. Governors use relevant information to challenge the school effectively on its current performance. Governors and leaders have a strong understanding of the school's finances and monitor spending diligently. Leaders make effective use of additional funding such as the pupil development grant to provide appropriate staffing to deliver intervention programmes successfully and to provide pastoral support and nurturing activities for vulnerable pupils.

Leaders make effective use of performance management arrangements to improve aspects of teachers' professional performance and to support the school in achieving

improvement goals. For example, teachers use the school's new editing process effectively to support pupils in producing pieces of extended writing of good quality. Leaders ensure that professional learning is at the heart of maintaining high expectations and standards at the school. They accomplish this by sharing information following training and development, and by working alongside other good schools to share effective practice. For example, teaching assistants have benefited from woodland training and in-house ICT workshops, improving their support to pupils in these areas.

Leaders implement worthwhile self-evaluation activities that identify strengths and most areas for improvement successfully. They observe lessons, conduct learning walks, and carry out the scrutiny of pupils' books regularly. However, the outcomes of these monitoring activities are often overly descriptive and do not always have a sharp enough focus when evaluating data, pupil progress or specific areas of provision. As a result, there is not always a clear enough of a link between areas identified as in need of improvement and the priorities laid out in the school development plan.

Leaders plan effectively to develop local and national priorities. They have embraced the literacy, numeracy and digital competency frameworks well, and as a result pupils' standards are particularly strong in these areas.

Copies of the report

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

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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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