



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

**A report on**

**St Asaph V.P. Infants  
Upper Denbigh Road  
St Asaph  
LL17 0RL**

**Date of inspection: November 2019**

**by**

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

## About St Asaph V.P. Infants

St Asaph Church in Wales Voluntary-Controlled Infant School is in St Asaph, in Denbighshire local authority. The school caters for pupils between the ages of three and seven. Currently, there are 91 pupils on roll, including 26 who attend the nursery part-time. Pupils are taught in four single age classes.

The three-year average for the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is just over 22%, which is above the average for Wales (18%). The school identifies about 28% of pupils as having additional learning needs, which is higher than the Wales average (21%). A very few pupils have English as an additional language or speak Welsh as a first language.

The last inspection of the school was in June 2015. The acting headteacher took up her post in September 2018 and the acting assistant headteacher in June 2019.

Estyn does not inspect religious education or the religious content of collective worship when it is a school with a religious character. Instead, the governing body is required by law to arrange for religious education and collective worship to be inspected separately.

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 acting headteacher has developed a supportive and hardworking team of staff who show commitment to the school and its pupils. There is a strong focus on professional learning. This reflects the high priority leaders place on developing the skills of all staff. Staff embrace new initiatives and work effectively together to develop the school as a thriving learning community. All staff take good account of pupils' ideas of what they would like to learn. This helps nearly all pupils to become curious and resilient learners.

The school has an inclusive ethos where all staff know the pupils well and provide high levels of care, support and guidance. Teachers plan a wide range of interesting and stimulating learning opportunities. They make effective use of areas of learning indoors and outdoors, to develop pupils' literacy, creative and physical skills successfully. As a result, pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning. This supports their development as independent learners and enables them to make good progress.

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

## **Recommendations**

R1 Improve planning for pupils to use and apply their numeracy skills independently

R2 Improve pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills

R3 Strengthen the role of parents and governors in school improvement planning

## **What happens next**

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

## Main findings

### Standards: Good

Many pupils enter the school with skills just below the expected level for their age. During their time at the school, most pupils make good progress, particularly in improving their oracy and writing skills. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards meeting their individual targets.

Across the school, most pupils are keen to talk to visitors about their learning and are confident speakers. By Year 1, many pupils adapt their speech appropriately, according to the situation. For example, they speak knowledgeably about why specific planets are unsuitable for humans to live on as part of their topic work on space. Most pupils listen well to the contributions of others and respond thoughtfully. For instance, nursery pupils listen carefully to their peers' suggestions of how they could dig different sized trenches when laying plastic pipes in the outdoor role-play construction area.

Most pupils in the nursery class quickly understand that letters and words convey meaning. They enjoy making marks in foam, coloured rice and use large chinks to attempt to write letter sounds. In reception, most pupils use their phonic knowledge effectively to write simple sentences linked to their topic work about journeys. Over time, most pupils develop a solid understanding of a wide range of different forms of writing. They apply this knowledge well in their own work. Many Year 1 pupils use capital letters and full stops with growing accuracy in their writing. Many pupils in Year 2 use simple adjectives to add interest to their stories about travelling through the jungle. Older pupils that are more able confidently draft and redraft their story openers to engage the reader.

At an early stage, most pupils begin to understand the importance of books and develop an enthusiasm for reading. In nursery and reception, pupils retell the story of 'We are going on a Bear Hunt', enthusiastically. As they progress through the school, nearly all pupils use their knowledge of letter sounds well to read unfamiliar words. By Year 2, most pupils demonstrate a firm understanding of the features of books. They use the front cover to predict what the story might be about, and discuss what they think will happen confidently. Many older pupils read with enjoyment. However, on occasion, they do not always use their higher order reading skills well enough to read with fluency or meaning.

Most pupils develop a secure mathematical knowledge. When given the opportunity, they apply their numeracy skills independently across areas of learning. Younger pupils make strong progress with counting, matching and recognising numbers to 10, for example when parking their bikes and scooters in numbered parking bays. Many pupils use mathematical language linked to size competently, for instance when building tall towers with blocks, and when comparing the length and width of plastic pipes. By the end of Year 2, most pupils have a strong understanding of the four rules of number and know which operation to use to solve mathematical problems. Many older pupils apply their mathematical skills well in their topic work on journeys, for instance when completing a tally chart to show the different types of vehicles that go past the school. They ably extract information to say which vehicle they observe the most or the least. Most transfer this information well to produce an accurate bar graph.

Most pupils develop and use their ICT skills appropriately. Younger pupils independently use touch activated recording devices to listen to instructions for their learning tasks. They are beginning to use programmable devices, and understand that pushing the arrows makes the robot move in a particular direction. Many pupils across the school use computer tablets to photograph what they have done competently. By Year 2, most pupils use their computer skills effectively to support their learning. For example, they use a variety of computer apps to enhance their story writing and to embed their understanding of addition and subtraction. However, in general, pupils' ability to use the full range of ICT skills independently is at an early stage of development.

Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes towards learning Welsh and many are developing Welsh oracy skills appropriate to their age. Nearly all pupils are able to follow familiar commands in Welsh, and respond enthusiastically. Many pupils use familiar greetings, and are increasingly confident in picking out key vocabulary in simple sentences. Many older pupils are able to read familiar words used during lessons, and are beginning to develop their Welsh writing skills appropriately. For example, they write words and simple phrases linked to their topic work.

Nearly all pupils develop their physical skills successfully and are very active from an early age. Most demonstrate good spacial awareness and co-ordination when riding bikes, jumping, and balancing. Many younger pupils manipulate pincers well to pick up hidden letters and small objects. They enjoy using small scoops to transfer mud and water when 'baking a cake' in the mud kitchen. Most Year 1 pupils change direction adeptly when learning new cricket skills.

Most pupils develop valuable creative skills that they express across the curriculum in a wide variety of forms. For example, older pupils work well collaboratively outdoors to explore ways to create a large model space rocket. Younger pupils enjoy making music outdoors using pots and pans.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good**

Most pupils feel safe and happy in school. Most behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and courteous to each other and visitors.

Most pupils across the school have a positive attitude to learning and are enthusiastic and eager to try new things. They are curious and confident learners from an early age. Most pupils remain actively engaged in their learning. They follow instructions well and persevere to complete their tasks. Most pupils work collaboratively in pairs, for example when planning what to take on their journey to the moon.

Across the school, pupils are confident to contribute ideas to topic planning. They identify what they already know or like about a topic, and what they would like to find out next. This informs teachers' planning successfully and enables them to enhance areas of learning accordingly. For example, pupils wanted to make a den for a bear and were curious to find out more about space as part of their topic on journeys.

Most pupils settle quickly to their tasks in lessons. They demonstrate resilience in their learning and use a range of suitable strategies when they find their work difficult.

Most pupils are beginning to reflect on how well they feel they have tackled a task. Many younger pupils use happy or sad faces to explain how difficult they found something. Older pupils use a 'success ladder' effectively to reflect on what they feel they have done well, and what they need to do in order to improve.

Nearly all pupils know the importance of keeping healthy and fit. They talk knowledgeably about healthy food choices for snacks and the need to drink water regularly. Most pupils eagerly take part in physical activities as part of their daily routines. Many pupils offer sensible suggestions about the benefits of exercise, for example by stating 'it helps our heart stay healthy'.

Many older pupils take on leadership responsibilities with enthusiasm, as part of the school's pupil voice groups. They enjoy representing their peers and feel that they are making a difference to the school. Pupils in the eco club support recycling and improve the school grounds successfully. They clearly explain the impact of waste on the environment, such as polluting sea life with plastics. This work helps pupils to develop as responsible citizens.

The school council takes pride in supporting school improvement, for example when writing to parents to ask for donations of equipment and resources to improve the outdoor learning environment. The Criw Cymraeg promote the development of pupils' Welsh language skills successfully, through playing games in Welsh at playtimes.

Most pupils know how to stay safe online. Older pupils explain the importance of having passwords, and informing an adult if they are worried about anything. Pupils take part in events to promote an awareness of road safety enthusiastically. They design and make placards to highlight the issues around the busy road outside school.

Nearly all pupils know the importance of attending school regularly and respond positively to the school's attendance initiatives. Most pupils talk enthusiastically about the 'weekly attendance shield' that recognises the class with the best attendance. However, over the last four years, attendance has not compared favourably with levels in similar schools.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Good**

Strong and supportive working relationships between staff and pupils foster mutual respect. As a result, classrooms are busy and productive places where pupils engage in their learning eagerly. Teachers and teaching assistants know pupils' individual needs well. They manage their behaviour sensitively and calmly. This is particularly effective in supporting vulnerable pupils to engage in their learning and to make good progress.

Staff introduce new topics in an imaginative way that succeeds in capturing pupils' imagination and interest immediately. For example, a mystery parcel arrived containing a toy penguin and pupils were enthused by the task of tracing its origin. Staff set clear learning expectations, and adopt a brisk pace to their teaching. This moves pupils learning forward successfully. Teachers deploy support staff purposefully to support individuals and groups of pupils. Support staff make valuable contributions to raising the standards of literacy and numeracy that pupils achieve.

The school is making suitable progress in planning for its transition towards the new curriculum for Wales. Across the school, teachers plan together in teams to provide pupils with exciting and real-life learning experiences. All staff give pupils regular opportunities to contribute to what they would like to learn, for example by choosing different themes to study within their overarching topic on journeys.

The school takes good account of foundation phase pedagogy. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' literacy, physical and creative skills through beneficial practical activities, both indoors and outside. This supports pupils' wellbeing and engagement in learning very effectively. There are worthwhile opportunities for pupils to contribute suggestions for tasks that allow them to practise skills linked to their topics in the learning environments. In the best examples, this ensures that pupils are active and inquisitive, make independent choices, and use their problem solving skills well. For example, they work well together in the role-play garage to find solutions as to why a car has broken down.

A clear system of graded challenges for literacy and numeracy activities provides pupils with a choice of tasks at different levels of difficulty. This ensures that tasks meet the needs of all groups of learners, including the more able, successfully. Staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills, for example when writing an interesting recount of a recent visit to a planetarium. However, teachers do not always plan opportunities for pupils to use and apply their numeracy skills independently, well enough. As a result, there are missed opportunities for pupils to consolidate their prior learning.

Staff assess pupils' progress regularly, both informally and formally. They use information from assessments increasingly effectively to recognise where individual pupils need additional support or challenge. They provide useful spoken and written feedback that helps pupils know how well they are doing, and what they need to do to improve. This encourages pupils to begin to take on responsibility for their own learning. By using questioning techniques skilfully, and discussing the work that pupils produce, staff ensure that pupils clearly understand their next steps in their learning.

Teachers use the locality and visits to enrich pupils' learning. For example, pupils develop well as ethical and informed citizens by taking part in litter-picking activities, and improve their understanding of their 'Under the Sea' topic by visiting an aquarium.

Teachers are beginning to identify interesting opportunities for pupils to apply their ICT skills through their topic work. For instance, pupils use computer apps to import photographs from their visits, and to add text to sequence events, and describe the day.

All staff model incidental Welsh effectively, and as a result many pupils are familiar with simple key vocabulary such as colours, numbers and terms to describe the weather. The school promotes Welsh culture well, when celebrating St David's Day and Saint Dwynwen's Day.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The school has an inclusive and caring ethos where pupils and staff take pride in their school. Staff create a calm learning environment and promote high standards of behaviour and manners amongst pupils.

The school makes appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Staff encourage pupils to make healthy choices with regard to food and drink. Pupils have ready access to a water fountain to fill their water bottles for use in class. The school provides regular opportunities for pupils to use sports equipment at playtimes in order to stay active. There are worthwhile opportunities for pupils to consider their own wellbeing and safety. For example, the local police liaison officer teaches the importance of staying safe online.

There are valuable opportunities for pupils to engage in a purposeful way with their local community. Pupils sing for residents of a local home for the elderly and the school has strong links with the local cathedral. The school offers worthwhile opportunities for pupils to participate in creative arts activities. For example, pupils take part in regular whole school performances, and annual Christmas and St David's Day concerts.

Members of staff welcome parents to visit the school and encourage them to engage in 'parental share days'. These provide a beneficial opportunity for parents to find out about how their children learn. The school's open evenings provide parents with useful information about their children's progress. Parents receive useful information about the topics their children will be covering in the coming term. This detailed information includes ideas for further activities and links to websites that may be of interest.

The school's provision to support pupils with special educational needs is strong. A beneficial range of interventions supports pupils' academic and social skills successfully. This has a positive effect on targeted pupils' standards and wellbeing, and ensures that they make good progress. The school makes effective use of external agencies such as speech and language therapists and a family engagement officer, to support pupils with specific needs.

Staff use an online system to track and monitor the progress and wellbeing of all pupils effectively. Leaders use this information well to identify and provide beneficial support for pupils who may be underachieving. Leaders track and monitor pupils' attendance robustly and work closely with the school's attendance officer to work with families of pupils with low attendance.

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and do not give cause for concern.

### **Leadership and management: Good**

The acting headteacher provides the school with strong and purposeful leadership, and distributes responsibilities well. There are clear lines of communication. Open and honest dialogue develops staff understanding of their role in helping to move the school forward. Leaders set high expectations, and they support and challenge staff to meet these successfully. The acting headteacher has established a clear vision for the school that focuses on raising standards and developing staff and pupils as

individuals within an inclusive setting. As a result, there is a strong team ethos and all staff work together purposefully to support each other to bring about school improvement. There is a positive culture of sharing effective foundation phase practice and pedagogy, which is engaging and motivating pupils very successfully.

Members of the governing body are supportive of the school and know its priorities for school improvement well. They meet regularly and fulfil their statutory obligations efficiently. Governors have a suitable understanding of how well the school is performing. They are beginning to take an active role in contributing to the self-evaluation process. For example, they conduct learning walks around the school in order to develop their understanding of the impact of initiatives and changes. However, this is at an early stage of development.

Senior leaders work closely with staff and promote professional values and behaviours successfully. They are a committed and supportive team who readily share their expertise and experience. This enables staff to plan together to provide a range of rich and stimulating learning opportunities for pupils both indoors and outside effectively.

The acting headteacher has put in place clear systems to support the school's process of planning for improvement. They draw on a broad range of first hand evidence such as, pupil and staff questionnaires, observations of teaching, scrutiny of staff planning files and pupils' books. These processes provide leaders and staff with an accurate picture of the school and help move it forward successfully. Leaders track pupils' performance regularly and use the information effectively to identify areas where the school needs to improve. This has led to worthwhile developments to improve the provision for supporting pupils with special educational learning needs and those that are more able.

Many of the school's targets for improvement support national priorities well. For example, work to develop pupils' understanding of the four purposes of the curriculum for Wales and strategies to involve pupils in curriculum planning are effective. This has brought about notable improvements to the levels of independence, curiosity and enjoyment of active learning that pupils display. For example, as part of a science investigation, Year 2 pupils made mice out of paper cones and worked out how to alter the height they went by squeezing the air out of plastic milk bottles using different levels of force. This work has also empowered pupils to talk maturely about their learning characteristics and how they influence matters that affect them.

The school makes effective use of strategic partnerships with other local schools to support the professional learning of all staff. This work has a positive impact on many aspects of the school's work. For example, pupils from the local Welsh high school come and read with older pupils. This is beneficial in improving their Welsh reading skills.

Leaders ensure that all staff have regular opportunities to undertake worthwhile professional development and training. Staff evaluate the impact of training well. For example, bespoke training for support staff on supporting pupils with specific learning and emotional needs enables these pupils to engage in the full range of learning activities in class.

Parents have a suitable range of opportunities to express their views about the school. The school is developing a wider range of ways to communicate with parents, and leaders are beginning to act on any suggestions. For example, following a request they are compiling a booklet of Welsh phrases to help parents to support their children in using these at home.

The headteacher and governing body manage school finances effectively and keep spending under careful review. Despite the age of the building and the associated maintenance difficulties that arise, staff provide a welcoming and engaging indoor and outdoor environment. This supports pupils' learning and wellbeing successfully.

Leaders target finances well to cater for pupils' academic and emotional needs, to meet priorities in the school's development plan and to support staff training. They use grants such as the pupil development grants well to improve vulnerable pupils' literacy skills and their emotional wellbeing.

## Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent 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 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' wellbeing, 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](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

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

<b>Excellent</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>	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:

Publication Section  
Estyn  
Anchor Court, Keen Road  
Cardiff  
CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

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