



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

**A report on**

**Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School**

**Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School  
Salop Road  
Welshpool  
Powys  
SY21 7FA**

**Date of inspection: March 2022**

**by**

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

## About Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School

Name of provider	WELSHPOOL CHURCH IN WALES PRIMARY SCHOOL
Local authority	Powys
Language of the provider	English Medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Church in Wales
Number of pupils on roll	280
Pupils of statutory school age	218
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	25
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average  <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 21.3%)</i>	38%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a)  <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 20.6%)</i>	39.9%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	20%
Date of headteacher appointment	September 2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	N/A
Start date of inspection	21/03/2022
Additional information	

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](https://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

Pupils at Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School enjoy attending school. They are keen to talk to adults and speak confidently about how proud they are to be in their new school building. Pupils feel safe and well cared for, and they trust that adults will always support them through difficult times. Over their time in school and often from quite low starting points, pupils, including those in the specialist centres, make appropriate progress in most areas of learning. Pupils have many opportunities to make decisions about improving their school and are delighted to work alongside school leaders to bring about change.

Pupils' well-being is at the heart of the school and staff work hard to ensure that the school is a thoughtful and inclusive environment. This inclusivity is shown by the positive relationships between staff and pupils. Teachers, including those in the specialist centres, think carefully about how pupils learn best and employ a range of approaches to engage them successfully in their learning. All staff are developing their professional skills and knowledge together well. This enables them to adapt provision to best meet individual pupils' needs. The care, support and guidance provided across the school community is exceptional and supports the school's vision, to 'bring out the best in each other'.

During a remarkably challenging time, the headteacher, alongside the school leadership team, has amalgamated three local schools into one, created a strong team ethos amongst all staff and successfully supported pupils' well-being. They have formed close working partnerships with many outside agencies, earned the trust of parents and established a very productive approach to identifying the right provision for pupils to succeed. Leaders and staff are beginning to develop a curriculum that reflects the environment and community in which they live. Leaders keep the work of the school under review and there are suitable arrangements for evaluating the quality of school improvements. On a few occasions monitoring activity does not always pick up on the areas that need improving, such as the way teachers support pupils to improve their work or how effectively teachers' planning helps to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve provision for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills
- R2 Improve teachers' use of assessment and feedback to support pupil progress in lessons and over time
- R3 Strengthen self-evaluation processes to focus more specifically on the impact of teaching on learning

## **What happens next**

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to 'recognising the rights of young carers' for dissemination on Estyn's website.

## Main evaluation

### Learning

Since returning to school, most pupils have re-engaged with learning positively. Overall, they make appropriate progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding during their time at school.

Pupils in the school's specialist centres and pupils with additional learning needs in mainstream classes develop well as individuals and learners and make good progress overall. Nearly all younger pupils in the specialist centres work particularly well and show high levels of engagement in the school's outdoor learning space. They learn to take appropriate risks and develop their balancing and physical skills well, for example when building bridges using planks and crates. They follow their own interests and access resources with high levels of independence and sustain their focus in activities for extended periods. Pupils communicate their needs effectively, for example by asking adults for help. Many pupils collaborate, take turns, share, and help each other through their play. Most older pupils respond well to class routines and have positive and trusting relationships with adults.

Pupils that are new to English usually make good progress from their individual starting points. They adjust to the new language, school life and learning very well. Across the school, many pupils make good progress in developing their speaking skills over time. They talk with appropriate confidence about their activities and their work, for instance to describe their paintings, drawings or to explain how they are trying to make models of a church.

Many younger pupils read simple books well with growing confidence and fluency. They make simple inferences and predictions based on what they have read. They enjoy reading and, in a few instances, show this by laughing at the pictures and explaining why they are funny. Many older pupils read appropriately and with fluency. They use phonetic knowledge to build unfamiliar words. Most recall what they have read and talk knowledgeably about different characters. They use their knowledge of texts to make inferences about the choices characters make and explain these appropriately.

Overall, pupils' writing skills develop appropriately. The youngest pupils experiment with mark making, for example using chalks on the playground. Many Year 2 pupils are beginning to present their work well. They create detailed story maps for traditional tales as part of class activities and as individuals. They develop the ability to write at length for a suitable range of purposes and show a developing awareness of basic punctuation. More able pupils make good progress and write well independently, for example to recount a visit to the local pet shop. The progress of older pupils' writing skills is not as strong. Pupils write for a suitable range of purposes and show a growing awareness of the features of different types of writing. In the best examples, they engage the reader well, for example by using interesting vocabulary in a chronological report. However, pupils of all abilities often make basic mistakes with grammar and punctuation. They repeat these errors over time and do not regularly edit or refine their work to make improvements. This limits the progress they make.

Many pupils make appropriate progress in learning Welsh. Pupils from reception to Year 2 enjoy Welsh language stories, sing songs about the days of the week and count in Welsh confidently. By Year 2, pupils pronounce Welsh words well, for example to recite parts of the poem 'Un Noson Dywyll Dywyll'. Pupils in Year 3 and above write about their holidays and most make a good attempt at reading their own Welsh work. However, they do not respond confidently or with enthusiasm to basic questions in Welsh.

Due to the pandemic pupils from reception to Year 2 have missed a considerable amount of their early mathematical development and, as a result, their level of understanding of a few concepts is low. For example, lower ability pupils struggle to estimate the number of trees on a grid and are unable to write the number. More able pupils use apparatus appropriately to form simple number sentences with numbers to 100. They work well in pairs to form these sentences and to use the apparatus to check their work. Many pupils in Year 4 and above use a suitable range of strategies when problem solving. For example, they partition large numbers to help them to add and use number lines to help with division. However, they use these strategies with variable success and do not always have the opportunity to learn from mistakes they have made. Teachers' planning, expectations and feedback for mathematics do not consistently support pupil progress as well as they could.

Across the school, most pupils use their digital skills regularly and well to support, extend and present their learning, for instance to produce digitally recorded weather forecasts and to design models of sustainable houses. Pupils from reception to Year 2 use tablet devices well to create posters combining text and graphics. Many use data handling skills appropriately, for example to collect and present information about eye colours in the class.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Most pupils have adjusted to school life well since returning in September 2021. This follows a very challenging period through the pandemic and when moving into new school premises. Many display good levels of resilience and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are proud to be in their new school and most enjoy the facilities at their disposal.

Most pupils feel safe and cared for and have a strong sense of belonging. They are confident that adults and other pupils will help them if they have a problem. Pupils are keen to attend school and enjoy the wide variety of learning experiences provided for them. Nearly all pupils are welcoming and polite towards visitors and many share their experiences of school enthusiastically. They understand their role in caring for each other, such as when being on hand to console a friend who is upset. Generally, pupils start the day feeling understood and cared for due to the well-structured way that all staff welcome the pupils into school.

Pupil voice is a strength and most take full advantage of opportunities to be influential, for example through their work in a significant number of useful pupil voice groups. These groups include Worship Leaders who manage a 'value points' system that leads to rewards for good behaviour and Super Ambassadors who created a video to raise awareness of children's rights. Most pupils feel that they are listened to well and that they influence the work and life of the school positively. For instance,

Digital Leaders place new learning apps on laptops and the Criw Cymraeg encourage all pupils to use Welsh by designing and placing Welsh displays around the school. In addition, pupils receive opportunities to influence teaching and learning policies, for instance through the use of digital whiteboards that let pupils collaborate and make suggestions in real time.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily. When given the opportunity, pupils take part in physical exercise activities enthusiastically. Most understand the dangers that may arise in their everyday lives and know what steps to take to stay safe. Nearly all pupils understand the importance of staying safe online. For example, Year 3 pupils outline the dangers that may arise as a result of unsuitable use of the internet.

Most pupils settle quickly and work purposefully, they behave responsibly and move around and between rooms safely and sensibly. They collaborate well and show respect and care for the ideas of others when working in pairs and groups. Most pupils play co-operatively, take turns and support each other well when playing games and socialising at break times. Most pupils act considerately towards other pupils and adults. They explore important values such as trust and compassion through the curriculum and demonstrate these qualities well throughout the day. Pupils know who to turn to if they have worries or concerns and that staff will provide them with the support they need. They know that they can rely on adults to deal effectively with any instances of poor behaviour. As a result of these positive attitudes and the work staff have done to create a strong nurturing ethos, the school is a calm and orderly learning environment.

Many pupils engage well with their tasks and work effectively together or on their own. When they find their learning interesting and stimulating, and when the pace of lessons is good, they engage well with tasks and make good progress with the development of their knowledge and skills. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 enjoy thinking about the sights, sounds and feelings they would experience at the top of a mountain and on the shore and work energetically to create imaginative poems. The school is beginning to develop its approach towards encouraging important learning skills, such as perseverance. Pupils are responding well to this. For example, pupils in reception and Year 1 enjoyed hearing about the Yeti who needed to work hard to develop his roar and how they also need to persevere when they find a task difficult. However, these approaches are not yet fully embedded across the school.

When given the opportunity, many pupils respond suitably to feedback from adults and their peers to improve their work and develop their skills further. Pupils are beginning to consider how well they are progressing with their learning and to think for themselves what their next steps should be. This skill is less well developed in the oldest pupils.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic year 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).



## Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, most teachers develop positive working relationships with pupils and create a warm, purposeful and supportive learning environment. Staff manage pupils' behaviour very well using an effective range of strategies. This includes dealing with occasional incidents of challenging behaviour sensitively and supporting well-being as well as learning.

In many classes, including the specialist centres, teachers consider how pupils learn best and employ a range of approaches to engage them successfully in their learning. They make good use of outdoor areas, play equipment and digital technology to enhance learning. They occasionally respond to pupils' ideas such as creating sea from water, and snow from foam, to support pupils to use their senses in imagining what they might see, hear and smell at the beach or on a mountain. Many teachers plan authentic learning experiences, including opportunities to be creative and solve problems, for example considering how to combat the effect of deforestation on the planet. They use questioning effectively, encourage collaboration and are beginning to help pupils to develop the language they need to talk about their learning. This support enables pupils to understand how they might feel at different points in their learning, for example confused, frustrated or confident. However, in a few classes, where teaching is less effective, teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils and do not adapt the work appropriately to meet pupils' needs well or provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills

Throughout the school most teachers share useful learning objectives and success criteria with the pupils. In a few classes, teachers involve pupils in assessing their own work and the work of their peers. This is successful in supporting pupils to understand how they can improve their work, for example by making better vocabulary choices in their descriptive writing. Teachers have begun to consider how to improve the quality of feedback to pupils. However, this has been hampered by the pandemic and, overall, teachers do not use their assessment of learning or feedback effectively to inform planning and ensure that pupils understand their next steps in learning.

Teachers provide appropriate opportunities to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum. For instance, pupils use a spreadsheet to work out the cost of school uniform and contribute to a report about the role of animals in the First World War. Inconsistencies in approaches to planning suitable learning experiences however, mean that these opportunities do not always build pupils' skills systematically to secure progression in lessons and over time.

The school is developing a curriculum focussing on its aspirations for pupils in the community across the six Areas of Learning and Experience. The school provides opportunities for pupils to learn through cross-curricular themes such as Natural Disasters or War and Peace. Pupils share their ideas at the start of new topics to identify the things they are interested in learning about. The current collective focus on human and spiritual values is a strength of the school and reflects its inclusive nature. Pupils are encouraged to explore their own beliefs, for example about eternity and marriage. They reflect on aspects of world religions and consider how they can enact the themes of Bible stories in their everyday lives. Teachers integrate aspects

of diversity into planning, for example, considering equality through their work on International Women's Day. Visitors to the school further enrich the curriculum by providing exciting opportunities for pupils to practice creativity through dance and enterprise through science and technology activities.

Pupils have appropriate opportunities to learn about the history and culture of Wales, for example, by celebrating special events such as the Urdd centenary and an annual Eisteddfod. Teachers plan suitable opportunities to develop pupils' Welsh language skills.

### **Care, support and guidance**

The school knows its pupils, their backgrounds and the local community very well. Leaders and staff have developed a range of effective systems to ensure that pupils and their families receive the encouragement and support they need to flourish at school. Its work to support pupils' emotional well-being through a wide variety of nurture strategies is highly effective. For example, the school employs a family liaison officer to deliver specific support to identified pupils and their parents. This helps pupils to regulate their emotions and provides parents with a better understanding of why their children may sometimes behave in negative ways and how they can best address this. Parents and pupils value this support. For example, pupils who have moved from the school's nurture class into mainstream classes describe how staff have provided them with the techniques and skills to manage their emotions.

The school's support for young carers is innovative and effective. The school has trained staff and developed systems that allow it to identify and support pupils who have responsibilities for looking after relatives at home. The school works well with an external agency to ensure that these pupils have opportunities to play and build friendships. This work has a highly positive impact on these pupils' sense of well-being. The school provides good support for pupils and parents of pupils whose first language is not English or Welsh, for example by employing Polish speaking teaching assistants to work with pupils and liaise with their families.

Leaders and other staff have ensured the provision of a wide range of pupil voice groups to assist and steer the work of the school. Leaders take the work of these groups seriously and pupils know that adults will listen to their views and act upon them. For instance, Worship Leaders help deliver, organise and evaluate the effectiveness of collective worship. Staff ensure that these groups represent fully the broad range of pupil abilities and backgrounds within the school.

The school has well developed and effective systems to support pupils with additional learning needs. It has clear processes to identify pupils in need of support, plan interventions and evaluate the impact of this work. The school's electronic record keeping systems ensure an effective sharing of information internally and with outside agencies, including the local authority. Senior leaders make sure that referrals for additional help are followed through and that pupils receive the specialist advice and support they need. The school operates a wide range of intervention programmes to address gaps in pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Leaders, teachers and teaching assistants work well collaboratively to regularly review and revise the support for pupils with additional learning needs. The school is preparing well for the transition to new national additional learning needs arrangements.

The school monitors pupils' attendance closely. It works well with external partners such as the Educational Welfare Officer and Educational Psychologist, to engage with pupils and their families to support good rates of attendance. The school has developed solid systems to ensure the safety of pupils. Its safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Teachers ensure that pupils regularly consider values such as trust, honesty and respect through the curriculum, specific events and pupil voice groups. For example, Super Ambassadors lead the school's work on human rights and help to ensure that pupils understand their rights and responsibilities. Teachers regularly identify opportunities for pupils to reflect on issues around equality, diversity and inclusion. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 explore different types of love, such as those between a child and their parent, a man and a woman, or people of the same sex. The school's ethos ensures that there are regular opportunities for pupils to explore their spiritual beliefs and find out about the characteristics of other religions, for instance finding out how Muslims show their commitment to God or by exploring how Buddha found enlightenment.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the school has worked imaginatively to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to develop confidence through participating in performance. For example, pupils in reception and Year 1 perform the Polish language poem, 'Panie Janie' in a short video clip. At Christmas, pupils performed carols around the town as a replacement for their normal Christmas production. Recently, the school has arranged for external providers to deliver creative dance sessions for all pupils.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher provides thoughtful and compassionate leadership. She has worked tirelessly alongside the senior leadership team to amalgamate three local schools into one and to create a strong team ethos amongst staff. At the same time, she has worked with leaders and staff to ensure that the well-being of pupils is paramount. In a relatively short period of time and through the challenges of a pandemic, leaders have created an inclusive culture where pupils feel secure and have a strong sense of belonging. Leaders have a solid understanding of the diverse needs of individual pupils and the local community, they have a 'can do' approach and strive with great passion to meet these needs effectively.

All leaders have high expectations of themselves, their staff and the pupils. Working closely with the whole school community, the headteacher has created a values led whole school vision that is clearly understood by all staff and pupils. Overall, leaders establish and maintain a strong safeguarding culture at the school.

Senior leaders work very well as a team and have successfully led many improvements in the school, particularly to improve pupils' welfare. For example, the very good provision for pastoral care ensures that vulnerable pupils attend school regularly and that the school meets their emotional needs effectively. Close partnerships with many agencies, such as the police and social services, are highly productive and this team around the child approach enables the school to clearly identify the right support and provision to enable pupils to succeed. Leaders of the specialist centres ensure that their pupils integrate very well into the life of the school.

They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and work alongside skilled support staff to provide purposeful and challenging learning activities for pupils.

The school's work in partnership with parents and support agencies is exceptional. Leaders think carefully about how to adapt the school's provision to ensure better engagement with parents. For example, the school pastoral team organise courses that help parents to support their child's well-being and provide thoughtful aid to those who find themselves in challenging circumstances. Parents have a deep trust that the school is doing the right thing for their children and that staff will always act in their best interests and work with them sensitively, for example when supporting parents to develop effective behaviour management techniques.

The leadership structure and distribution of roles and responsibilities is developing appropriately and supports school improvement. The culture of professional learning is modelled well by leaders and the headteacher encourages all staff to undertake research-based learning that directly links to the needs of the pupils. For example, following shared research around childhood adversity, leaders concluded that staff would benefit from receiving professional learning on how to provide mindfulness sessions to vulnerable learners.

The performance management of staff is well co-ordinated and links to school improvement priorities. Whilst the pandemic has restricted the opportunities for staff to visit each other's classrooms, they have shared their ideas and practice online and attended many virtual sessions to enhance their practice. For example, staff have benefited from enhancing their digital skills to best support their pupils when learning at home. Professional learning for teaching assistants and for staff in the specialist centres has enabled them to meet the particular needs of pupils more effectively, for example to develop outdoor learning provision and enable pupils to improve their co-ordination skills. School leaders are committed to staff development. They create opportunities for teachers to grow into leadership roles and for support staff to progress their careers.

Overall, the school is addressing national priorities appropriately. It has put in place a range of measures to address the impact of poverty and tracks the progress of disadvantaged pupils effectively. Leaders and staff are beginning to work collectively to start to implement the Curriculum for Wales. Most pupils have developed effective digital skills and teachers have rapidly developed their approach to using these as a teaching tool. The school uses grant funding highly effectively. Leaders ensure that thoughtful, bespoke support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils such as play therapy and music tuition provide experiences that impact positively on their well-being and learning. Leaders and teachers track individuals and groups carefully to ensure that interventions, funded by grants, help pupils to make strong progress.

Senior leaders have developed appropriate procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the school's work that leads to tangible improvements. For example, monitoring activities from a survey on family engagement led to school nurse drop-in sessions for parents and pupils to access confidential advice and support. However, this work is not always focused sharply enough on evaluating the impact that the school's actions have on improving teaching and learning. As a result, self-evaluation processes sometime miss important areas for improvement, such as in planning for the progression of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

The governing body has a wide range of skills and experience and support and challenge the work of the school appropriately. Governors have a sound understanding of the strengths and priorities of the school and play an important role in establishing and supporting its strategic vision and supporting senior leaders. They ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

## 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' 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))

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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Publication date: 26/05/2022