



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

A report on

Froncysyllte C.P. School

**Woodlands Road
Froncysyllte
Llangollen
Wrexham
LL20 7RS**

Date of inspection: July 2022

by

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

About Froncysyllte C.P. School

Name of provider	Froncysyllte C.P. School
Local authority	Wrexham County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	24
Pupils of statutory school age	22
Number in nursery classes	1
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 21.3%)	33.8%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 22.2%)	12.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	8.3%
Date of headteacher appointment	January 2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	July 2014
Start date of inspection	04/07/2022

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

The Dee Valley Federation of schools was formed in January 2014 and consists of Froncysyllte Primary, Garth Primary and Pentre Church in Wales Controlled Primary schools. It is led by the recently appointed headteacher and a team of assistant headteachers at each of the three schools. These senior leaders manage the day to day running of each of their schools and assume responsibility for the operational matters at each school in the headteacher's absence.

Froncysyllte Primary School is a calm and safe environment where pupils feel happy and secure as part of a small family community. All staff know their pupils well and work well together to support their social, emotional, and academic progress. For example, pupils from Ukraine have recently arrived at the school and staff and pupils have welcomed them into the family at Froncysyllte and ensured that they have settled well into school life.

Most pupils make sound progress across the school, including those with additional learning needs (ALN). Pupils are developing good literacy and numeracy skills and are beginning to use these well across different subjects and activities. A particular strength of the school is how well staff develop pupils' creative skills. They provide many engaging opportunities for pupils to use and apply their artistic skills across their topics. Pupils are developing their voice within the school, for example as 'tech heroes' or being a 'maths whizz'.

Staff in the school are working well together to trial new approaches to the curriculum as they move towards the Curriculum for Wales. They are beginning to develop interesting themes that are strongly influenced by pupils' ideas. Teachers work hard to design learning opportunities that are purposeful and creative, and are beginning to link skills and knowledge across different areas of learning. While these approaches are still developing, at times the topics that pupils choose do not always allow the curriculum to fully reflect the cultural heritage and diverse nature of Wales.

Teachers and support staff provide good support to all pupils in lessons. In each class there is a strong culture of kindness and respect for others, which staff encourage through a gentle but firm approach. Teachers use positive praise regularly both in their verbal feedback and when marking pupils' work. However, questioning and feedback do not always challenge pupils to think deeply enough about their learning and how they can make their work better. Often, pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to redraft their work and improve its quality.

The headteacher, senior and middle leaders are beginning to have an impact on improving the opportunities for pupils across the federation. They have recently begun to reflect on the school's provision and consider necessary improvements to be made, for example in mathematics and teachers' assessment of pupils for the next steps in their learning.

Recommendations

- R1 Develop leadership at all levels across the federation, and share the strong practice that exists
- R2 Strengthen self-evaluation processes to focus on the impact of teaching on learning and the progress of pupils over time
- R3 Strengthen teachers' strategic planning for pupil progress across the wider curriculum
- R4 Secure teachers' understanding of effective classroom assessment to evaluate teaching and learning and identify how to help pupils move on in their learning

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will work with the local authority to review the school's progress.

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils start school with skills and understanding that are around those expected for their stage of development. Almost all pupils, including those with ALN, make good progress across the curriculum from their starting points.

Younger pupils talk confidently about their work and listen well to other pupils and their teachers, for example when discussing their models created in the construction area. Many respond well to their peers, ask appropriate questions, and express their opinions showing respect for others. As pupils move through the school, they continue to develop their speaking and listening skills effectively. Many pupils communicate thoughtfully and sensitively with their friends and share their ideas confidently, for example when working collaboratively to plan a trip to visit Australia. A particular strength of the school is how well pupils listen and support each other's learning.

Younger pupils are developing their reading skills well across the school. They read with enthusiasm and talk about how reading is important in their daily lives, for example when reading signs or going shopping. Many use their knowledge of phonics effectively, to identify unfamiliar words, and most read with a good understanding of punctuation within the text. Pupils new to reading in English. For example, those who have recently arrived at the school from Ukraine have made very strong progress. The majority of older pupils are developing as confident, fluent and expressive readers. They use a range of strategies, including using their background knowledge, to interpret unfamiliar texts, and are developing a wide vocabulary. Older pupils often discuss more complex ideas in books, for example when discussing the moral issues in the second world war.

Younger pupils are developing their writing skills suitably. They move quickly from mark making to more extended pieces of writing and develop their early spelling and punctuation appropriately. Most write about their own experiences, for example when talking about 'their news' and a minority are beginning to write with imagination. As they move through the school, most pupils' writing develops successfully, and they write for a range of audiences and for different purposes. In many cases, pupils use a good range of punctuation and spell more complex words accurately. The majority of pupils are developing a fluent handwriting style and present their work with care. In a very few cases, pupils' handwriting and presentation vary in quality. Many pupils use a good range of sentence structures that engage the reader and use vocabulary to good effect, for example when writing an aboriginal dreamtime story. However, pupils do not always redraft, edit or improve their writing and as a result do not always develop effective strategies for making considered improvements to their work.

Many younger pupils are beginning to develop their mathematical skills appropriately. They use everyday objects to count in twos and can measure carefully using a range of apparatus. Older pupils develop their number skills competently and many add and subtract four and five digit numbers including decimals confidently. They are developing a wider range of mathematical skills. For example, they measure and draw angles accurately and are beginning to use algebra to understand how

numbers can be represented symbolically. Nearly all pupils have good data handling skills and use this well to support their learning. Across the curriculum, pupils draw detailed and accurate line graphs, for example in their science work. Pupils are beginning to develop their problem-solving skills in mathematics and apply these skills more often in relevant and challenging contexts across the curriculum.

The majority of pupils make appropriate progress in spoken Welsh. When following modelled language by staff, they can respond suitably to simple questions. However, most pupils are not always confident in using basic language patterns independently and do not always pronounce familiar words correctly. Many older pupils write with developing confidence in Welsh and, when supported by appropriate scaffolds, use a range of extended sentence patterns purposefully. For example, they express their opinions about different types of local artwork by using interesting adjectives.

Pupils' digital skills are developing well across the school. Many younger pupils use technology appropriately, for example when photographing their work and uploading it to share with their parents, or using programmable toys. Older pupils use a wider range of digital tools effectively to support their learning. They use coding to produce animations and create databases to analyse population data in different countries.

Most pupils across the school are developing their thinking skills appropriately. Where this is done well, they apply them in challenging contexts across the curriculum. Older pupils, for example, work together to design, cost, and build a bridge, and younger pupils design a pulley system for a lighthouse keeper.

Many pupils' creative skills are well developed across the school, and they use them in a range of activities across the curriculum. Very young pupils, for example, use small brushes skilfully to create 'dainty paintings' and older pupils use a range of natural materials to create story maps in the outdoors. While pupils' fine motor skills are developing well across the school, younger pupils do not always have enough opportunity to engage in more physically challenging activities, particularly in the outdoor environment.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

The school is an inclusive learning community, where everyone is valued, and pupils are polite and courteous. Nearly all behave well in class, are calm and responsible when moving around the building, and show kindness towards each other. Younger and older pupils play happily together and engage enthusiastically and cooperatively at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Most pupils respond well to the school's positive approach to behaviour management and as a result almost all arrive at school happy and enthusiastic for the day ahead.

Pupil well-being is a priority at the school, and the use of circle time, yoga, well-being boards and the Strong Minds group support most pupils effectively. Nearly all pupils know that there are adults they can speak to if they need help or support and as a result they feel safe and secure in school.

Many pupils make healthy choices related to diet and lifestyle and understand the importance of eating healthily and taking part in exercise and physical activities. The

school has useful links with sporting organisations that develop pupils' physical skills, for example the coaching provided by Wrexham Football Club.

Most older pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe online and take part in online safety week. The Digital Leaders have designed posters to explain e-safety and have a feedback box for pupils to put in any concerns that they have. The school's police liaison officer visits regularly to further raise awareness of the issues around cyber bullying.

Most pupils are ready to learn and collaborate well in class, and many speak confidently and clearly when discussing their work. They are eager to share their views and ask and answer questions posed by visitors and their classmates. They co-operate well when working in pairs and small groups and value the views and opinions of others. Many pupils are developing their enterprising and problem solving skills in different contexts. For example, older pupils compete in the Formula 1 schools' project, where they were successful in securing sponsorship for team kits.

Pupils have good opportunities to take on a range of leadership roles within the classroom. Older pupils engage in a wide range of roles, for example as 'energy savers' or 'tech heroes'. As a result, most pupils are developing as responsible individuals who show care and consideration for their school. Pupil leadership groups have recently been reintroduced and are beginning to have an impact on school life. For example, the Eco Committee arranges litter picks around the school.

Nearly all pupils engage enthusiastically with new or unfamiliar experiences and ideas. Most younger pupils persevere and work together to look for solutions when faced with challenge, for example when working together to provide help for a lost whale. Pupils value and respond to the positive verbal feedback that they receive from adults and are aware of what they do well. When given the opportunity, pupils are starting to understand how to improve their own work.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years of 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of the inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

All staff have strong relationships with pupils and treat them with kindness and respect. They know their pupils well and develop a culture of positive support within the school community. All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and take regular opportunities to reinforce good attitudes to learning.

Teachers and teaching assistants support all pupils, including those with ALN, effectively throughout most lessons. They monitor their progress in learning and intervene where necessary to guide their next steps. Verbal feedback is sometimes used effectively to support and challenge pupils' learning. However, at times this is restricted to positive praise and does not always challenge pupils well enough to develop their critical thinking. The majority of lessons are well paced and ensure that pupils are engaged. However, in a minority of instances, younger pupils are not given enough opportunity to move on to more purposeful learning tasks quickly enough.

Almost all teachers have strong subject knowledge and plan clear objectives for learning. They explain tasks clearly to pupils and help them understand what to do and how to do it. Learning intentions are shared appropriately with older pupils, and these support them in understanding what is expected. Occasionally, teachers build success criteria with pupils to further support their understanding of a good piece of work.

Most teachers use a good range of resources in their lessons and the indoor learning environments are thoughtfully designed. These environments allow pupils to develop their creativity and imagination, for example when using recycled materials to build a whale and engaging in block play. In a few instances, teachers provide too much direction for younger pupils and do not make the best use of available provision to develop their independence. Teachers are beginning to develop the use of the outdoors to support pupils' learning, for example through 'Welly Wednesday'. Staff are working together to provide more regular opportunities for younger pupils to engage purposefully with the outdoor environment, take risks and further develop their physical skills.

All teachers provide regular verbal and written feedback on pupils' work. In most cases, this feedback is positive and identifies what pupils are doing well. However, feedback does not always clearly identify the next steps for pupils learning well enough, and older pupils do not have regular opportunities to edit, redraft and improve their work over time.

Most staff are beginning to use assessment data appropriately. For example, they analyse results from the national personalised assessments to improve provision for problem solving in mathematics. As a result, staff ensure that pupils who are at risk of underachieving are provided with suitable support to ensure they make good progress.

The school provides pupils with a variety of learning experiences across all areas of learning and experience. They develop their interests and wider skills, to stimulate and challenge many pupils to strive to make good progress. Staff are improving their provision for the Welsh language and this is beginning to effect positively on pupils.

Teachers are beginning to plan more systematically to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding as they move through the school. They work together to shape their planning and to consider the principles in preparation for the new Curriculum for Wales. The school's provision for personal and social education develops pupils' understanding of their own well-being and identity suitably. Teachers promote pupils' creative skills particularly well and provide valuable opportunities for them to develop and apply their skills across the curriculum. However, these approaches to curriculum design are at an early stage, and planning for activities that support pupils to make systematic progress in skills is not fully embedded.

Teachers encourage pupils to contribute their views about what they would like to learn through 'we wonder' questions. They embrace these views and weave them purposefully into series of lessons. Many topics result in a showcase that pupils are excited to share with their peers and parents, for example by turning a classroom into a 'Viking Museum'. Educational trips and visits are used appropriately to enhance and enrich pupils' understanding of the curriculum, for example a visit to Erddig

House. However, the over reliance on pupil led topics does not always allow opportunities for the curriculum to reflect the cultural heritage and diversity of Wales.

Care, support and guidance

The ethos of the school is warm and friendly. Positive relationships are a strong feature across the whole school community, and this contributes significantly to pupils' happiness and well-being. The school supports the emotional health and social needs of pupils well. This ethos is embedded into the work of the whole school, which has helped to ensure that pupils regain their sense of security, well-being, and readiness to learn following the pandemic.

Through a range of pupil groups, the school is beginning to develop opportunities to participate in decision-making at a school level. These provide nearly all pupils with emerging opportunities to suggest what and how they learn. Pupils are also beginning to support change across the school for example by introducing a whole school initiative to promote the Welsh language. As a result, pupils engage positively with school life and feel proud to be part of its family.

Nearly all pupils have opportunities to participate in performances and events throughout the year. This provision helps develop their confidence and self-expression. For example, pupils share their learning with their parents and their peers during class assemblies, and they perform Welsh songs and poetry in their annual Eisteddfod.

Across the school, familiar routines support pupils successfully. For example, the check-in system at the start of the school day helps to settle pupils for learning. All pupils have a 'one page profile' that outline their interests, how they like be supported to learn and the things they are working to improve. These profiles strengthen the school's understanding of each pupil and help staff further support learning and well-being.

The ALN co-ordinator works effectively in partnership with the teaching assistants, other schools, and outside agencies to provide effective support for learners with ALN or who may need extra support. This has been important following the recent pandemic where a minority of pupils needed regular focused support to catch up on important learning.

The school has developed clear and relevant values, which focus upon pupils influence on the school in co-operating with each other, building positive relationships, respecting others, and valuing their achievements. Staff use these values to encourage pupils to celebrate similarities and differences. This helps them to begin to understand important issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion and develops the values of empathy, courage, and compassion. The school encourages pupils to help others by raising money for different local and national charities.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding are appropriate and give no cause for concern. There is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school; staff communicate well with each other to support pupils and understand their roles in keeping pupils safe. There are robust procedures in place to report and monitor

concerns. Leaders work well with parents to provide useful support for those pupils whose attendance is not good enough and as a result attendance rates for these pupils improve.

Leadership and management

The federation is led by the recently appointed headteacher and a team of assistant headteachers at each of the three schools. These senior leaders manage the day to day running of each of their schools and assume responsibility for operational matters at each school in the headteacher's absence. Within a relatively short period of time, the headteacher has established a new vision to take the federation forward. He worked with stakeholders to agree the vision for the federation of LIONS: Learners leading Inspirational Opportunities in a Nurturing, Safe environment through faith. This vision reflects the warm and inclusive nature of each of the federation's schools.

The headteacher has implemented systems and processes to improve the way in which staff share information across the federation. Leaders have strengthened how well they communicate with parents and inform governors of new developments at the schools. Across the federation, many staff carry out their roles effectively and contribute well to improving outcomes for pupils. However, not all senior leaders model professional values and behaviour well enough and the majority of leaders do not have a strategic impact across the federation. As a result, there are stark difference between many aspects, including the quality of teaching and learning between, and at times within, the three schools.

Senior leaders are beginning to work together to reflect on the strengths of the federation's approach to curriculum design. This has enabled them to identify the strengths across the federation and areas for development to inform future planning. For example, there has been rapid progress by leaders at Garth Primary School, which made improvements to curriculum provision to ensure continuity in planning and, as such, nearly all lessons are engaging and stimulating. However, across the federation, not all senior leaders support the headteacher to bring about the necessary improvements to address the weaknesses in provision or to improve pupil outcomes.

The headteacher has a clear focus on improving provision for teaching and learning and has already begun to tackle underperformance. Recently, he has redistributed curriculum leadership responsibilities to ensure that there is more balance within the curriculum teams and a distribution of expertise across the federation. This enables the schools to continue to develop their curriculum with the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. To achieve this, leaders encourage and support staff to innovate and trial new approaches. However, across the three schools, curriculum planning is at varying stages of curriculum development and leaders have not yet addressed any important misconceptions that staff have at this early stage.

Recently, the headteacher has re-established monitoring and self-evaluation activities across the federation. Soon after taking up his post, the headteacher has taught in every class in the three schools to get to know pupils and understand their experiences of school. In addition, he has met with every member of staff to seek their views on their strengths and those of the federation. He has begun to develop

leadership capacity by involving other middle leaders in the monitoring and evaluation processes. For example, the numeracy leaders have recently undertaken the scrutiny of pupils' work to identify ways forward in developing numeracy across the three schools. As a result of this important work, these leaders are beginning to feel more confident in their roles.

Leaders are beginning to identify the schools' strengths and areas for development. This information relates to national priorities, such as the Curriculum for Wales, and many leaders and staff have a sound awareness of national priorities in education. The federation's development plan reflects this and as a result of monitoring activities leaders have identified important aspects of the schools' provision that need improving. In addition, leaders analyse pupil performance data effectively. As a result of this work, many leaders are aware of the areas most in need of development, such as mathematics across the federation and sharing the good practice in writing.

Although leaders ensure that staff have opportunities to undertake useful professional development, they do not always ensure that training aligns well enough with the schools' priorities. Staff are beginning to work together to share their strengths and in the best practice staff have valuable opportunities to watch each other teach, for example in the teaching of Welsh. However, this work is not consistent across the federation.

The federation's governors are well informed about the schools' work by the headteacher and many senior leaders across the federation. However, they have not resumed visits to the school to enable them to gain first-hand evidence and as a result they rely too heavily on information provided by leaders. Governors are keen to share their expertise in improving the school, for example using their knowledge and strengths in matters relating to health and safety and when diligently managing the financial arrangements of the three schools. They balance short-term and longer-term needs of the schools within the federation, and ensure that the funding from the pupil development grant effectively supports pupil well-being and progress to reduce barriers to learning. Governors keep up to date with national developments to support their work and are aware of their statutory responsibilities. Governors ensure that they have appropriate policies and procedures in place to promote the importance of healthy eating and drinking among pupils.

When attending the school sites, governors act as role models and encourage pupils to make healthy choices. They work well with leaders to ensure the school has suitable safeguarding measures and enable a generally strong culture of safeguarding. For example, governors have purchased an electronic system to provide a more consistent approach to the recording of safeguarding concerns. However, not all senior leaders fully support the culture of safeguarding when ensuring effective implementation of the federation's attendance strategy.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

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

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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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