



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

**A report on**

**Holt Community Primary School**

**Chapel Street  
Holt  
LL13 9DJ**

**Date of inspection: November 2022**

**by**

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

## About Holt Community Primary School

Name of provider	Holt Community Primary School
Local authority	Wrexham County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	63
Pupils of statutory school age	56
Number in nursery classes	*
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%)	4.9%
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%)	*
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	03/02/2014
Start date of inspection	07/11/2022

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](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

Holt Community Primary School is a happy and inclusive community that places a high priority on the well-being of its pupils. Staff work together effectively to identify the needs of all individuals within the school. As a result, pupils take pride in having robust relationships to discuss any concerns in a safe environment.

Most pupils make good progress from their starting points. On the whole, they make sound progress in developing their English skills. With the support of staff, they are beginning to use simple sentences to speak Welsh in formal situations. Pupils contribute well to a variety of groups and committees and enjoy sharing ideas on what they would like to see when developing the school.

All staff members have high expectations of pupils and challenge them to consistently produce work of a good standard. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that is adapted continuously while preparing and planning for the Curriculum for Wales. It ensures suitable opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and ICT skills in a range of real-life contexts. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum. There is a strong working relationship between staff and assistants, and they facilitate learning successfully.

The headteacher and leaders share a clear vision to provide a complete education based on supporting pupils' well-being and resilience. They concentrate well on ensuring that all staff feel that they are part of the school team. This ensures that everyone, including governors, understand the school's priorities and work together supportively. However, the school's self-evaluation and planning for improvement arrangements are not robust enough to identify its strengths and areas for improvement.

## Recommendations

- R1 Sharpen self-evaluation processes to ensure that action plans focus on specific areas for improvement
- R2 Plan purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

### Learning

During their time at the school, most pupils develop knowledge, understanding and skills that are appropriate for their stages and starting points. They recall previous learning, acquire knowledge, deepen their understanding, and develop their skills successfully. Many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make strong progress in their learning.

Nearly all pupils have good speaking and listening skills, they are attentive in class and respond concisely and enthusiastically to questions. Younger pupils listen carefully to stories and join in eagerly with rhymes and songs, they explain with great delight how they are making a bird feeder using breakfast cereal. In Years 3 and 4, most pupils communicate clearly with others, such as when they discuss how you must not play football near to a busy road. As pupils continue to Years 5 and 6 their language progresses extremely well, such as when talking about keeping healthy. They give comprehensive information about the different types of foods and vitamins we need to maintain a balanced diet.

The use of Welsh language is developing appropriately. In the early years pupils develop their early language skills effectively and are beginning to respond enthusiastically to questions about the weather, colours, and days of the week. Older pupils respond well to instructions and questions about their work in the class and are beginning to learn language patterns such as 'bore de, sut wyt ti?'. However, across the school pupils are not yet confident enough to use the language beyond the classroom environment.

Most pupils' reading skills develop effectively as they move through the school. The younger pupils are happy to share their thoughts about their favourite book. Most discuss the content of books and will talk animatedly about their favourite characters. They use an appropriate range of phonic strategies to read familiar words successfully. By Years 5 and 6 most pupils read accurately and with good expression. They use phonic knowledge, contextual information, and pictures to help decode unknown words. They practise their advanced reading skills successfully, whilst gathering information from different sources, such as books, fact sheets and electronic devices. For example, when producing leaflets and information related to their favourite authors.

Most pupils' writing skills develop well during their time at the school. Most of the youngest pupils make marks in the sand to form letters and write simple words. By Year 2, pupils are beginning to write independent pieces confidently, such as writing about the failed gunpowder plot. They use exciting descriptions such as when seeing the fireworks 'they boom, banged and twinkled'. As pupils progress through the school, they confidently apply their writing skills to a range of genres. By Year 6, most pupils write extensively, with interesting vocabulary to enrich the content of their work. They organise their written work effectively in sensible paragraphs, using complex and compound sentences astutely, for example when comparing the greenness and ruralness of Holt to the busier city of Wrexham.

From an early age, nearly all pupils develop their mathematical skills effectively. Nearly all are confident when undertaking matching games, and enthusiastically join in counting rhymes and songs. By Year 2 most pupils have a thorough understanding of numbers up to 100 and beyond. This progress is sustained as pupils move through the school. By Year 6, most pupils use their mathematical knowledge effectively to compile graphs and collect data, for example by comparing the life of rich and poor people in Tudor times.

Across the school, pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developing well. Younger pupils are very self-assured in using computer tablets to take photographs of their work and upload it to online platforms. Older pupils use various ICT devices confidently in their cross curricular work. For example, Years 3 and 4 use a map-based app to help them identify road safety hazards in the locality whilst writing instructions to cross the road. By Year 6 many pupils conduct web-based research confidently and have used the information to create digital adverts to persuade tourists to visit Brazil.

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

Nearly all pupils demonstrate exemplary behaviour when moving around the school, in lessons and during break times. They are polite, courteous, and respectful towards each other, staff, and visitors. Nearly all pupils are proud of their school and feel safe and secure within its positive and caring learning environment. They are confident that staff will listen to their concerns and deal with any problems that arise. Nearly all pupils work and play well together.

Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to learning and work hard to complete activities. Many pupils develop the confidence to talk about their learning and suggest how they might improve their work. They show resilience and confidence when faced with challenging tasks, for example when looking for errors in complex line graphs. Many pupils allow learning to continue without any disruptions and cooperate effectively. Most pupils believe their contribution to school life is valued and conveyed purposefully in the school vision, 'Happy, resilient learners achieving together'.

Nearly all pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and safe, and most are developing well as healthy, confident learners. They understand the importance of a balanced diet and how to keep both their bodies and minds fit and healthy. For example, pupils in Year 2 created shopping lists of fresh food to design a healthy meal. They participate in a variety of physical activities with enthusiasm including extra-curricular activities such as yoga, circuit training and gymnastics. Most pupils know how to keep themselves safe online.

Across the school, most pupils have a sound understanding of children's rights. They reflect thoughtfully on why there is a need for rights and rules within their school and the local community. This leads to a respectful ethos where pupils show empathy and consideration towards each other.

Many pupils shoulder responsibilities conscientiously, for example, through a range of pupil voice committees, including the Well-being Ambassadors. Most pupils present themselves with confidence and accuracy whilst explaining and undertaking

their roles. They understand that they represent the views of other pupils and undertake this responsibility conscientiously. For example, the Well-being Ambassadors have developed a calming area in the school with comfortable furniture and relaxing music. This has led to a calming atmosphere both inside the school, and in the outdoor learning environment.

Pupils understand their role within the local community and the wider world. They are developing well as ethical and informed citizens and demonstrate this in many ways. For example, pupils made 'forget-me-nots' to raise awareness of dementia and then shared these during a visit to the local residential home.

Pupils are attending school more regularly this year compared to last year, when the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact nationally on school attendance. Considerably fewer pupils are persistently absent this year compared to last year.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

All teachers and support staff have fostered very effective relationships with pupils based on a respectful and supportive ethos where pupils feel valued and listened to. Staff have high expectations for pupils and take every opportunity to reinforce and support the positive attitudes to learning that pupils display.

Staff know their pupils well and adjust their teaching effectively to meet the needs of learners. Almost all staff use questioning skilfully to check for understanding, addressing misconceptions and to deepen pupils' thinking. They monitor progress of pupils carefully during lessons and provide timely feedback, which develops pupils' understanding of what they've done well and challenges them to successfully improve their own work.

Teachers maintain a good pace to their lessons with a range of stimulating activities. They set clear learning objectives and use a range of purposeful resources to engage pupils' interest. As a result, pupils immerse themselves completely in their learning and make sound progress in their skills. On the whole, teachers use progress-tracking arrangements appropriately when planning the next steps in pupils' learning.

Across the school, staff members provide a calm learning environment. Staff use the school's resources effectively, including the outdoor areas regularly, for example during 'Welly Wednesday' sessions. This has a positive effect in developing most pupils' abilities to persevere with tasks and to work well together, for example as pupils use fallen leaves on the ground to make self-portraits. Teachers design the classroom environment thoughtfully to support pupils' learning skills. They ensure that pupils can contribute to, and choose from, a good range of interesting activities, which allows them to practise their skills and enhance their understanding. The recent introduction of 'key ideas' as part of the learning process is beginning to give pupils the opportunity to develop their independent learning and to have an influence over what and how they learn. However, this is a recent initiative, and it is too early to see its full impact on pupil standards.

The school has a rigorous and structured curriculum that builds, progressively on pupils' previous knowledge. There are well planned links between literacy, and digital

skills, which provide progression across the curriculum. However, across the school, there are limited opportunities for pupils to consolidate their numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum.

The school is making good progress towards developing and refining approaches to the Curriculum for Wales. Teachers work well together and are beginning to plan and provide a range of engaging learning experiences. For example, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to learn about the culture and heritage of Wales by studying the locality of Holt and making visits to the local church and Holt castle. As a result, pupils are becoming more aware of their Welsh heritage and celebrate their nationality, for example by celebrating Wales's participation in the World Cup by holding a whole school 'jamboree'.

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

The school is a nurturing and caring environment where pupils feel safe, happy, and secure. There is a strong emphasis on knowing the child as a complete individual, in addition to getting to know their families. This has a strong influence as the school's staff work successfully with its community. The school has a strong ethos focused on positive well-being and mental health.

Leaders and staff use pupil tracking information effectively to plan and provide appropriate support for all pupils. The school makes effective provision for the very few pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and this is successfully led by the additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo). The school quickly identifies the needs of ALN pupils and other pupils requiring support and worthwhile targets are developed to monitor their progress. For example, focused literacy interventions have helped pupils to make good progress in reading in short periods of time. The school has made good progress with ALN reform and works effectively with outside agencies and local schools.

The school provides opportunities which contribute well in developing pupils' spiritual and ethical beliefs and support pupils to investigate issues such as the importance of respecting others. For example, focusing on stories and messages from the Bible in collective worship and in classroom activities provide useful opportunities for pupils to reflect. However, opportunities to explore issues around diversity are more limited.

Leaders and staff have a very positive partnership with parents and families. A variety of media are used successfully to inform them about key activities and events which ensure there is effective communication between teachers and parents. As a result, parents are aware of the school's events and play an active role in supporting activities.

The school provides a rich and varied range of trips and visits that support the curriculum and encourage pupils' engagement in their learning, such as visits to a local garden centre to pick pumpkins, alongside residential trips for older pupils. The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to perform in Welsh celebrations including the annual Eisteddfod.

The school has sound strategies in place to promote good pupil attendance. This means that pupil attendance has now increased to pre-pandemic levels. There is

support from the local authority educational welfare officer to increase the attendance of a very few pupils. There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. The school's arrangements to keep pupils safe meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

## **Leadership and management**

Leaders have a clear vision for the school based on nurturing pupils' well-being and supporting their learning. This vision was co-constructed by pupils, staff, governors, parents, and the wider community. As a result, the ethos of the school promotes happiness and hard work which has a positive impact on pupil's welfare and standards. Leaders model professional values and behaviour that contribute purposefully to effective collaboration amongst staff which result in a strong team ethos that is a notable strength of the school.

Across the school, leaders at all levels have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. The dedicated staff team are energetic practitioners who share leaders' ambitions to do their very best for the pupils in the school. All staff take pride in modelling professional behaviours and attitudes, particularly around safeguarding. Leaders hold staff to account appropriately, for example through regular progress and tracking meetings to consider each individual pupil's progress. As a result, the school quickly identifies pupils who are found to be underperforming and places sufficient provision to improve standards.

Leaders and staff have a strong understanding of the needs of the pupils and the local community. They have developed productive relationships with parents and communicate regularly and efficiently through a range of platforms, including a parent forum which discuss class specific activities. The school held a successful curriculum awareness evening which helped inform the parents of its mission statement and curriculum planning, which helps parents to support pupils learning at home. The school and parents' forum 'Friends of Holt' are highly active within the school and have raised significant funds to help improve learning opportunities for pupils. For example, they fund educational visits to relieve financial pressures on families.

Arrangements for the management of staff performance are appropriate. Targets link well to the school's priorities and personal development. There is comprehensive provision for professional learning and a positive culture to promote this across the school. All staff are eager to seek and access opportunities for professional development and there are many examples where this is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and welfare, such as developing a whole school approach to wellbeing. This has directly impacted pupils' attitudes to learning.

Senior leaders have developed appropriate procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the school's work that leads to tangible improvements. For example, recent book scrutiny has led leaders to improve the school's feedback policy so that it reduces staff workload and improves pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. However, generally, monitoring activities are not robust enough and do not always focus sharply enough on evaluating the impact that the school's actions have on improving teaching and learning. As a result, self-evaluation processes sometimes miss areas of strength within the school and areas for

improvement, such as in planning for the progression of pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum.

The governing body has a secure understanding of its responsibilities. Governors have the best interests of the school at heart and are supportive of the school's work and influence its direction purposefully, for example by playing an active role in staff restructuring and delegation of duties. They understand the school's current priorities and why they are important. Governors challenge school leaders appropriately. However, at a strategic level, they do not monitor the school's provision or evaluate, pupils' standards robustly enough to drive improvement and act as a critical friend.

Governors and school leaders manage their budget well and careful financial planning has helped the school to make significant savings over several difficult years, enabling it to greatly reduce its deficit budget. The school allocates and monitors the pupil development grant and other additional funding carefully, ensuring that a range of intervention strategies is available to support the relevant pupils. 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' 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](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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to [publications@estyn.gov.wales](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales)

© Crown Copyright 2023: This report may be re used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 13/01/2023