



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

A report on

Alexandra School

**Bodhyfryd
Wrexham
LL12 7AZ**

Date of inspection: October 2023

by

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

About Alexandra School

Name of provider	Alexandra School
Local authority	Wrexham County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	377
Pupils of statutory school age	299
Number in nursery classes	37
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 23.7%)	37.7%
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 13.2%)	21.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	24.7%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/06/2015
Start date of inspection	09/10/2023

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

Alexandra Primary School provides a caring and inclusive environment. Positive relationships are fostered among pupils and staff, creating a friendly and supportive atmosphere where pupils are treated as individuals and feel valued. The school provides exemplary support for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) including those in its Resource Provision classes. It has a strong focus on offering pupils emotional support, which helps pupils to behave well and engage actively in lessons. As a result, most pupils make significant progress during their time at the school.

Pupils are confident speakers and listen well to others. From an early age, they share their ideas eagerly and express themselves clearly. As they progress through the school, they collaborate effectively and articulate their thoughts and ideas with growing sophistication. Pupils across the school read a variety of texts with increasing fluency and confidence. Their writing skills develop well, with older pupils using language thoughtfully. Pupils develop as confident mathematicians and are beginning to apply their skills suitably. However, teachers do not always ensure that pupils have enough opportunities to deepen and extend their skills independently across the curriculum. Whilst the school is beginning to make improvements in its provision for teaching Welsh, pupils' language skills are generally underdeveloped.

Leaders and governors are highly effective, with a clear vision and a strong commitment to maintaining high standards. The school continually reflects upon what it is doing well and how it can further improve and has robust processes in place to monitor pupil progress. Teachers receive purposeful professional development and support, and the school manages its resources well. For example, the outdoor learning area is a haven for pupils become immersed in the natural world and offers safe opportunities to take calculated risks.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen the links between areas of learning to provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding and further develop their independent learning skills
- R2 Improve pupils' skills in speaking Welsh

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils start school with skills below those expected for their age. During their time in school, most pupils, including those affected by socio-economic disadvantage, make strong progress. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), and those whose first language is not English, often exceed expected progress, particularly in their communication skills.

Most pupils listen attentively and speak confidently with their peers, school staff, and visitors. Reception pupils share their ideas eagerly and express their views clearly, for instance when proposing ideas for a science investigation. Older pupils collaborate well in pairs to share their learning, and by Year 6, most pupils express themselves articulately, for example when portraying historical characters.

Younger pupils develop their reading skills well, and as they move through the school, they use a broad range of strategies effectively when deciphering unfamiliar words. By Year 5, most pupils read a variety of suitable texts with fluency and appropriate intonation. They recall and summarise the main ideas in books they read, make informed predictions about what might happen next and describe the characters in stories they enjoy. By the end of their time in school, most pupils develop useful retrieval skills and use them effectively in their research.

Pupils' writing is developing well across the school. The youngest pupils know that words have meaning. They mark make in their role-play and are beginning to form legible letters. In Reception, pupils create imaginative stories and take pleasure in describing these to staff, who record their ideas. Older pupils develop a sound understanding of the skills they need to write in a range of genres. They choose phrases and vocabulary carefully to add intrigue to their imaginative writing and use formal language carefully when expressing their opinions, for instance when explaining the advantages and disadvantages of mobile phones. They are beginning to benefit from opportunities to write at length, drafting and re-drafting, but they do not always write purposefully enough across the curriculum.

Younger pupils develop a good range of mathematical skills. They use their knowledge of doubling when playing games and use natural resources to show their understanding of place value. Many older pupils are developing as confident mathematicians, handling larger numbers, and representing data in line graphs for a variety of purposes. In general, most pupils develop secure numeracy skills as they progress through the school, but do not always have enough opportunity to apply these skills at a sufficiently challenging level across the curriculum.

Pupils are beginning to develop their understanding of the Welsh language. Younger pupils recognise descriptions of the weather and are beginning to talk about their feelings in simple sentences. Older pupils respond appropriately to basic questions. A few extend their answers to give reasons and begin to read and understand simple phrases. However, across the school, pupils' Welsh language skills are underdeveloped.

Pupils use digital skills suitably to support their learning. They create musical compositions and design eye-catching posters, combining text and images when representing their research on ocean habitats. Older pupils create simple stop motion animations and are beginning to develop their coding skills, but are less proficient when using spreadsheets and databases, for example to analyse data or create simple formulae.

Pupils begin to reason in response to questions from a young age. Reception pupils relate their learning to their own experience, offering suggestions and expressing their opinions. In Year 1 and 2, for example, pupils work out how to transport water using a range of resources to create a channel for the water to travel through. Older pupils analyse the strengths and weaknesses of motte and bailey castles and adjust plans accordingly when their original design prototypes for rollercoasters fail.

Most pupils develop their physical skills well. The youngest pupils catch and throw balls, ride pedal bikes, and begin to develop their creativity when moving to music. Pupils in Year 1 and 2 use small tools and hammer nails deftly into wood with precision during forest school sessions. As they progress through the school, pupils improve and refine their physical skills through a range of sports and creative activities.

Pupils enjoy opportunities to develop their expression and creativity. They use their imagination well to create stories, drama, and poetry. They are beginning to explore a range of media and techniques in their artwork. As they move through the school, they begin to develop a wider range of skills, reviewing and refining their work. They enjoy singing and are beginning to explore how music makes them feel.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils across the school build positive working relationships with staff and each other. Pupils feel safe and valued because of the school's friendly and caring ethos. They know what to do and who to talk to if they have any concerns and are confident that these will be listened to and acted upon. As a result, pupils develop a strong sense of wellbeing and are well supported in their emotional, physical, and educational needs.

Across the school, pupils are courteous and well-behaved in lessons and during playtimes. They settle well to their work, engage quickly, and listen well to instructions. They collaborate well in pairs and groups, sharing ideas and taking turns happily. They benefit from discussions with their peers about their learning and how they can improve their work.

Pupils in the Resource Provision classes develop positive attitudes to learning. They engage well with learning activities, are confident and well-motivated and as a result are ready to learn and settle easily into daily routines when supported skilfully by adults. Pupils value the feedback they receive from teachers during lessons and use it to improve their work. They use success criteria and modelled examples successfully to understand what to include and how to improve. Most pupils participate enthusiastically in lessons and develop good levels of stamina and perseverance.

As they progress through the school, many pupils develop their co-operation and leadership skills well, often through valuable outdoor activities. Here, pupils solve problems, assess environmental risks, and engage eagerly with the natural world. Most pupils develop their physical skills suitably. They engage well in physical activity during lessons and at break times and enjoy a range of after-school activities that develop their physical and creative skills purposefully.

Pupils, including those with ALN, take on leadership roles and participate actively in various pupil voice groups throughout the school. For instance, pupils assume the role of "Heddlu Bach" to promote safety by conducting checks around the school and participating in a speed reduction program in the local area alongside North Wales Police. Pupils have a growing awareness of their roles as responsible citizens who actively influence their own lives and the lives of others in their community and beyond. They are involved in a range of worthwhile fundraising activities, such as organising a charity coffee morning.

Pupils gain a suitable awareness of the importance of internet safety and know how to stay safe online and how to recognise potential risks. They know who to turn to if they encounter situations that may cause them harm. Overall, pupils' levels of attendance are slightly below the average across Wales. However, a particular strength of the school is the relatively high attendance levels for pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

Teaching and learning experiences

Nearly all staff establish strong working relationships with pupils. Classes are calm, productive environments where pupils interact positively with each other. As a result, most pupils settle quickly to their work and behave well during lessons.

Most teachers have a secure knowledge of the areas of learning they are teaching. They develop useful success criteria for lessons and use these to provide clear and effective explanations. They use a variety of approaches to support learning and engage pupils. For example, they pause lessons to check on pupils' understanding and use questions well to help them recall previous learning and explain their thinking. This means that most pupils have a clear understanding of what to do and how to do it.

Teaching assistants are effective practitioners who work well in classrooms and across the school to support pupils' learning. They help nearly all pupils, particularly those with ALN, to make good progress.

The school uses a wide range of assessments to monitor pupils' progress and identify those who may need additional support. Teachers also use information from assessments effectively to inform pupils' next steps in learning. They provide timely and worthwhile feedback to pupils, which supports them to make progress during lessons. Although teachers provide opportunities for pupils to correct basic errors, they do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to understand their next steps in learning or to make more meaningful improvements to their work.

The school has worked with parents, pupils and staff to design a curriculum to meet the needs of its learners and its community. Teachers plan a variety of activities that

link to the areas of learning and experience (AoLEs). They plan effectively to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and evaluate purposefully how well teaching and learning experiences support pupil progress. They adapt teaching approaches carefully to support pupils' knowledge and understanding of concepts and reflect on what went well and what could be improved or extended in future lessons. Teachers are beginning to develop opportunities for pupils to apply their skills, including their digital skills across the curriculum. However, they do not focus their planning closely enough on helping pupils make links across the areas of learning and apply their skills independently.

Leaders and staff in the Resource Provision classes have designed a purposeful and pupil-centered curriculum. They plan a diverse range of learning opportunities and adapt their teaching thoughtfully to meet pupils' needs.

Teachers plan suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about the culture and heritage of Wales. They generally use resources appropriately to support pupils in developing their Welsh language skills. Across the school, teachers do not plan opportunities for pupils to communicate in Welsh often enough and as a result their Welsh language skills are under-developed.

Teachers use the local area thoughtfully to develop pupils' understanding of pupils' understanding of their community and their place in the world. Pupils discover how their city has changed through time, consider its amenities, attractions and its football team! Across the school, pupils make valuable links with local businesses, colleges and members of the community. These experiences raise pupils' aspirations and offer them a broad perspective on what their future might hold.

Teachers ensure that pupils stay informed about world events through news programs and literature. They benefit greatly from opportunities to learn from people who have overcome adversity, for instance, to understand and empathise with the experiences of refugees. The school celebrates a range of religious festivals and pupils learn about the lives of people who have brought about important changes to gender equality and sustainability.

The school makes good use of its outdoor areas to provide pupils with a range of activities that support their well-being. Across the school, pupils relish the time spent in their woodland area. They thoroughly enjoy building dens, taking risks, and using a wide range of tools. They are especially knowledgeable about risk-assessing their own activities.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring and inclusive community where pupils feel safe, and everyone's well-being matters. All staff understand pupils' needs, particularly those who require additional support. They ensure that all pupils have equal access to all aspects of school life. The school provides a wide range of well-being and learning support for its pupils, including bespoke support for pupils who need more help to regulate their emotions and to make progress in their learning. Consequently, pupils with additional learning needs make strong progress throughout their time at the school.

The care, support and guidance provided to pupils in the Resource Provision classes is a strength of the school. Staff address any issues that arise effectively and show compassion and support to pupils, making them feel secure and enthusiastic about coming to school.

The Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo) is particularly effective in managing and organising provision for pupils receiving additional support. She has established clear structures and rigorous procedures to identify, provide for and monitor the progress of pupils needing extra support and those with additional learning needs. The school's highly skilled teaching assistants employ a wide range of effective strategies and interventions to support pupils. Staff work well with a wide range of agencies who provide specialist support for pupils' emotional, health, social and learning needs and offer valuable guidance for their families. Staff encourage parents to play a full role in supporting their child.

Teachers provide a range of opportunities for pupils to learn about respect and develop empathy and compassion. The school is beginning to develop pupils' understanding of the rights of the child. Through these opportunities, teachers inspire pupils to reflect on the experiences of others and help them to resolve conflicts and nurture their understanding of right and wrong. During collective worship, pupils meet together to reflect on important moral and social issues, such as honesty, trust, responsibility, respect and tolerance.

The School Council, Criw Cymraeg and Digital Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to contribute to decision-making and improvements in the school. For example, the School Council promotes anti-bullying awareness across the school. As a result, pupils regularly influence school life and develop their leadership skills.

There are regular, useful opportunities for pupils to be active and to develop their physical skills. Staff create attractive areas indoors and outdoors in which pupils thrive. Staff offer worthwhile outdoor experiences so that pupils can learn to take appropriate, risks in a variety of challenging environments. Pupils enjoy the range of extra-curricular activities including dodge ball and sing and sign. Teachers provide pupils with valuable opportunities to participate in performance events to foster their self-confidence and teamwork.

School leaders monitor attendance robustly. The family engagement officer and the school's business manager work closely with families to improve pupils' attendance. They formulate plans with parents and pupils whose attendance falls below an acceptable level. Leaders have a clear understanding of attendance in the school and use this information to maintain positive rates of attendance.

The school has robust procedures for safeguarding pupils and all staff understand and promote the school's safeguarding policies and processes. Leaders gather feedback from staff on the effectiveness of training to strengthen the school's approaches further and seek opportunities in the curriculum to address any concerns that arise in the community. As a result, there is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and school leaders have established a clear vision for Alexandra Primary School, creating a safe haven that fosters pupils' excitement for learning and encourages them to show respect for each other. The headteacher is a strong and effective leader, who is well supported by a capable team of senior leaders. Together, they set and maintain high standards and collaborate constructively with all staff to ensure that pupils remain at the heart of the school's work. Consequently, staff and pupils feel valued and take pride in being part of the school community.

Leaders implement robust processes to monitor pupil progress and respond promptly to tailor teaching to pupils' needs. For instance, teachers regularly conduct short-term pupil progress reviews with their year group colleagues. In addition, they meet regularly with senior leaders to discuss the progress of each learner and identify next steps. As a result, leaders and staff throughout the school have a deep understanding of the progress pupils make.

Many teachers have opportunities to take on leadership roles. For example, they review the areas of the curriculum they are responsible for and identifying areas for improvement. Whilst this is beginning to influence the direction of the school, leaders do not always focus sharply enough on how well teachers plan for pupils to apply their skills with increasing sophistication and independence across the curriculum.

Leaders manage the Resource Provision classes effectively, fostering a culture of collaboration among staff. Staff share their expertise across the school, for instance when supporting class teachers or providing training. There are robust processes in place to monitor pupils' progress, evaluate the impact of teaching and reflect regularly on pupils' individual targets. Leaders ensure that all staff in these classes are suitably trained for their roles, maintaining high expectations of themselves and working diligently to meet the needs of their pupils.

Overall, leaders plan effectively for school improvement. They collaborate with staff to collect and analyse a broad range of information, including information on pupil progress, insights from learning walks and the views of pupils. In addition, leaders seek useful opportunities for the school's work to be evaluated by independent practitioners, including the school improvement officer and leaders from partner schools. Consequently, there is a strong culture of reflection throughout the school, with all staff contributing effectively. This allows for accurate judgments on the quality of teaching and learning across the school and, in most cases, clear identification of the school's priorities, such as improving pupils' writing skills across the curriculum.

Governors contribute purposefully to the culture of reflection and improvement in the school and work alongside staff to gather useful information. They collaborate effectively with leadership groups to set targets for improvement and seize opportunities to understand the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, for instance when attending pupil progress meetings. This means that the governing body has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, with many members contributing actively to the school's progress. For example, they recognise and support the school's efforts to improve the standards of spoken Welsh across all classes.

Governors have a clear understanding of national educational priorities. They meet regularly with leaders, including the ALNCo, to discuss progress towards national initiatives such as the Curriculum for Wales or the ALN Reform Act. They ensure that the school complies with its statutory requirement to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders ensure that staff have meaningful and regular opportunities for professional learning. They plan staff meetings systematically to create regular opportunities for staff to share good practice and discuss their teaching. Professional learning supports progress toward school improvement priorities effectively, such as the literacy training that staff have received which is impacting positively on pupils reading and writing skills. All staff feel well supported in their professional learning and there is a strong focus on developing the quality of teaching across the school.

Leaders and governors are well supported by the school's business manager and allocate and use the school's resources effectively. Classrooms and outdoor learning environments are well equipped, and leaders use grants such as the pupil development grant to ensure that there are good levels of staffing including a skilful team of dedicated support staff who are well deployed across the school. Leaders work well to ensure that families who are affected by socio-economic disadvantage are well supported, for example by supplementing the cost of school trips or providing free online school uniform for pupils that require it.

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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