



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

A report on

Llanfechain C.I.W. School

**Llanfechain
Powys
SY22 6UQ**

Date of inspection: July 2024

by

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

About Llanfechain C.I.W. School

Name of provider	Llanfechain C.I.W. School
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Church in Wales
Number of pupils on roll	34
Pupils of statutory school age	33
Number in nursery classes	0
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%)	10.0%
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%)	21.2%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/05/2016
Start date of inspection	01/07/2024

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

Llanfechain Church in Wales School is a happy, supportive and aspirational learning community. Pupils are proud of their school and appreciate the care and nurture that they receive. They are well behaved, polite, engaging and articulate. There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school, which helps pupils to feel safe and to enjoy their learning experiences.

The school provides an interesting and balanced curriculum that reflects pupils' needs, the school's values and the local context well. Over time, most pupils make good progress in developing their literacy and digital skills. The provision for developing pupils' numeracy skills is strong. They make strong progress and apply their skills effectively across the curriculum and in a range of contexts.

Teachers employ a range of suitable teaching strategies. They underpin learning activities with a clear purpose and ensure that they proceed at a good pace. Staff have a good working relationship with pupils and are effective language role models. They have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and support pupils well. Teachers provide pupils with regular feedback on their work. However, this does not always focus well enough on important areas for improvement or provide pupils with meaningful opportunities to respond and make improvements.

The headteacher is a passionate and caring leader. She has high expectations of herself and works diligently to ensure that all pupils achieve their potential. She is supported well by a small but conscientious team of staff who strive to achieve the very best that they can for the pupils and the school community as a whole. Governors provide strong support for the headteacher and staff and ensure that the school makes effective use of its resources. They have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and have a suitable awareness of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that teachers' feedback is timely and provides meaningful opportunities for pupils to respond and improve their work

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 school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible for free school meals and from low-income backgrounds, make good progress from their individual starting points.

Across the school, most pupils make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. Younger pupils listen to adults intently and talk enthusiastically about their experiences. They speak confidently and use subject-specific language effectively, for example when presenting their promises for a political manifesto. As they move through the school, most pupils converse with ease and maturity. They are comfortable discussing any aspects of their work and school life. Many older pupils are confident, articulate speakers and use a broad range of vocabulary effectively. They listen to each other respectfully and give valid reasons to support their opinions.

Through a variety of practical activities, many pupils in reception quickly develop an appropriate knowledge of different letter sounds. As they gain confidence, they begin to combine the sounds and read simple words and sentences accurately. By Year 2, most pupils become confident readers and display a good understanding of the content of the texts that they read. Older pupils read a wide range of texts with expression and fluency and summarise information from what that they read successfully. They use a range of useful strategies independently to read challenging or less familiar words. Pupils describe the plot of the books they are reading and the roles of different characters within the stories clearly. They confidently apply their reading skills to research information from books and relevant websites to enrich their work across the curriculum. For example, they use scanning techniques effectively to find interesting facts about recycling and waste to create an information poster.

Most reception pupils develop their early writing skills appropriately. They experiment with early mark making and begin to form recognisable letters. As they progress, many younger pupils organise their writing in well-constructed sentences for a variety of purposes. By Year 2, many pupils select imaginative vocabulary, for example to write short stories and poems. Many pupils in Year 4 produce highly detailed and informative fact files and leaflets. Older pupils show a good understanding of genres and purposefully apply their skills across the curriculum. For example, when writing a diary about life as a Victorian child they make purposeful choices of vocabulary to express the personal feelings of the writer successfully. However, as they move through the school a majority of pupils still make basic errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Across the school, most pupils' Welsh speaking and listening skills develop appropriately. Most younger pupils respond to simple, everyday Welsh instructions suitably and many older pupils hold simple conversations independently, applying a variety of familiar patterns.

Most pupils make good progress in the development of their numeracy skills, and they apply these confidently across a range of contexts. In reception, many pupils count objects accurately and begin to sort and classify shapes based on simple criteria. In Year 2 and Year 3, most pupils demonstrate a good understanding of place value in three-digit numbers and use standard units of measurement appropriately. For example, when investigating the mass of various objects, they read scales marked in grams and kilograms confidently. By the time pupils reach Years 5 and 6, most solve a range of challenging problems purposefully and accurately. They have a good understanding of basic geometry and solve simple linear equations confidently.

Many pupils develop their digital skills suitably. Younger pupils use these skills in a range of learning experiences, including programming a toy to follow a desired route and using tablet computers to record their work. Most older pupils use their digital skills effectively to support their learning. For example, they use formulae within spreadsheets to add a list of quantities and to create pie charts. Many older pupils are confident in applying their coding skills, such as when they design and develop interactive computer games.

Most pupils develop their physical skills well through a variety of beneficial experiences and activities. For example, younger pupils develop their fine motor skills as they use scissors confidently and pick up a variety of different sized objects using tweezers. Older pupils build upon these early skills through participation in after-school clubs, sporting events and by exploring the school's vast outdoor area as part of the curriculum and during playtimes.

Most pupils develop their creative skills suitably and make appropriate progress in their ability to apply these skills across the curriculum. The youngest pupils make adventurous choices when experimenting with a variety of natural materials, such as using a mixture of leaves and twigs, to create pieces of art. Older pupils use a variety of artistic techniques and draw inspiration from the work of a wide range of artists to create vibrant paintings and sculptures skilfully.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Almost without exception, pupils enjoy school and are proud to be immersed within its inclusive and caring ethos where everyone is valued and appreciated. Pupils develop a strong sense of belonging to this learning community that feels like a large, happy family. They are particularly fond of the working relationships they have with adults at the school, which are based on mutual respect and trust. Pupils feel confident that they can talk to an adult if they have a problem and that adults will help them when needed. They have an appropriate awareness of the need to support their emotional and mental health needs. For example, they make good use of the morning check-ins and staff react to any identified needs to provide timely support where required.

Throughout the school, most pupils are courteous and respectful towards their peers, staff and visitors. They co-operate effectively when working in pairs or small groups. They listen carefully to others' opinions and respect other people's right to feel differently about topics.

Behaviour across the school is good. Most pupils' attitudes towards their learning are positive and they approach their tasks and learning experiences enthusiastically. Many pupils listen attentively to teachers' instructions and engage purposefully with the class topics. However, rates of attendance have declined notably recently.

Many pupils, when given the opportunity, respond positively to feedback from teachers and apply it purposefully to improve their work. Pupils have a positive influence on what they learn within their class themes. They suggest ideas about what they would like to discover and learn at the beginning of, and during, a unit of work as new ideas emerge. This helps pupils to have a strong sense of ownership of their experiences and to approach their activities with enthusiasm.

Most pupils are resilient and persevere well when facing new challenges. They discuss and share ideas purposefully with their peers as they work together to solve problems and find solutions. For example, older pupils design, build and test a prototype model of a wind turbine using a range of materials. They use trial and error and learn from their mistakes successfully and maturely to come up with a final design that meets the required criteria.

Through the school values and their learning experiences, most pupils develop a strong understanding of the importance of being responsible citizens and protecting the environment. For example, older pupils discuss the negative impact of waste on marine life maturely and develop an increasing appreciation of the importance of recycling and living sustainably.

Through specific lessons and regular visits by the police school liaison officer, most pupils have a sound understanding of how to stay safe when working online. For example, they discuss confidently how to set strong passwords and keep them secure from others and know how to react should a stranger contact them online.

Most pupils understand the importance of engaging in regular exercise and the positive impact this has upon their emotional and physical well-being. They enjoy representing the school in various local tournaments across a range of activities including football and netball.

Many pupils relish the opportunities to develop their leadership skills through participation in a wide variety of committees. They shoulder their responsibilities maturely and are proud to represent and support their peers. For example, the Worship Group have implemented a designated outside area where pupils can spend quiet time reflecting on their thoughts and beliefs.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school is making good progress in developing its curriculum and planning to align with the principles of Curriculum for Wales. Leaders and staff work collaboratively with pupils, parents and governors to create and share a vision for their curriculum. Staff work together successfully to plan interesting experiences that build systematically on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding, as they move through the school. Teachers promote pupils' numeracy skills soundly and

provide suitable opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their literacy, digital and creative skills.

Pupils are beginning to influence their learning purposefully, such as when they select activities they would like to complete during their work on a particular theme. For example, during 'Science Thursdays', pupils suggest ideas for investigations and projects using the class thinking wall. Staff identify frequent opportunities to enrich the curriculum through valuable educational visits and by inviting visitors to the school. For instance, during a 'time travel' theme, pupils enjoy the opportunity to work with experts from Wrexham University to develop an interactive computer game.

The school provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the history and culture of Wales. For example, as part of their 'identity' topic, pupils learn about the history and origins of the Welsh language and the importance of tradition and belonging. Many staff use basic Welsh sentence patterns purposefully in the classroom, for example to give instructions to their pupils. Overall, the provision to develop pupils' Welsh skills is appropriate.

The school's personal and social education curriculum and the learning experiences that teachers plan successfully encourage pupils to understand their well-being and to consider their identity. Staff effectively promote the school's core values of perseverance, respect and resilience in all aspects of school life.

Teachers skilfully plan for developing pupils' understanding of cultural diversity through a range of effective activities. For example, pupils learn about famous role models, such as Martin Luther King. This helps most pupils to have a well-developed understanding of the similarities and differences between cultures and the need to treat others fairly.

Staff use outdoor learning areas effectively to develop pupils' skills. For example, pupils from Years 1 and Year 2 develop their measuring and thinking skills purposefully as they work together to calculate the perimeter of the school's netball court.

On the whole, teachers ensure that the pace of activities is appropriate and supports pupils to remain engaged in their learning. Teachers and support staff are good language role models and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. A particular strength is the strong, respectful relationship between staff and pupils. Staff support pupils' learning and well-being purposefully in the indoor and outdoor learning areas. They ensure that the working environment is calm and productive and that pupils feel listened to and are comfortable to ask questions if they need help with their learning.

Throughout the school, learning activities have an appropriate focus and staff provide suitable explanations to ensure that pupils understand what they need to do to succeed. They successfully encourage pupils to recall their prior learning at the beginning of lessons. In the best examples, staff use a good range of questioning techniques to reinforce pupils' understanding and to encourage them to expand their thinking. However, this is inconsistent across the school and,

where less effective, staff over-direct the learning, ask closed questions too often and do not promote independent learning well enough.

Staff provide regular feedback to pupils on their work. In the best examples, staff use a suitable range of strategies successfully, for example regular 'pitstops' to identify misconceptions and provide opportunities to share good examples of work. However, teachers' feedback does not always provide pupils with enough clarity about what they need to do to improve their work, and opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback are inconsistent. As a result, a few pupils do not make as much progress as they could.

The school makes appropriate use of a range of assessment strategies to monitor pupil progress over time. Regular pupil progress meetings, which include leaders, class teachers and support staff, ensure that most pupils receive the support and challenge they need to make good progress. Parents appreciate the information provided by the school on their child's progress. Reports to parents are detailed and clearly identify the next steps in pupils' learning.

Care, support and guidance

The care, support and guidance provided by the school is a notable strength. Leaders and staff promote a supportive, nurturing ethos that results in a strong sense of community. Staff have a thorough knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs and respond empathetically and decisively to any problems or issues they may be facing. Parents and carers value and appreciate the support that the school provides to their families as a whole.

The school's arrangements for supporting pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) are effective. As a result, most pupils with ALN make good progress over time. Leaders ensure that there are appropriate arrangements to facilitate early identification of pupils who may require additional support. They use this information purposefully to put in place appropriate programmes to support pupils' emotional well-being as well as developing their numeracy and literacy skills. The school co-operates closely with outside agencies, such as the education psychology service and the speech and language therapist, to provide specialist support to pupils where required. Staff meet regularly with parents and pupils to review progress and to plan the next steps in pupils' learning or highlight where additional support may be beneficial. Parents place a high value on the caring and comprehensive support that the school offers to pupils.

Staff ensure that pupils have valuable opportunities to take up leadership roles and responsibilities. These roles develop useful skills, such as effective communication and organisation. For example, the Criw Clic support and mentor their peers with the use of digital devices. They troubleshoot and solve problems that may arise and ensure that equipment is working and available for others to use. The Criw Cymraeg encourage the use of Welsh around the school purposefully. They organise games at breaktimes and reward their peers for using Welsh whilst playing and socialising.

Pupils develop their moral values effectively, for example during periods of collective worship. These periods encourage pupils to reflect upon how people

need each other for support and friendship. As a result, pupils develop their ability to show empathy towards others and the need to help others who may be facing daily challenges and difficulties.

Teachers provide a variety of purposeful opportunities for pupils to celebrate their Welsh culture and identity. They uphold Welsh traditions regularly, such as when pupils create garlands and bunting to celebrate the hosting of the Urdd National Eisteddfod locally.

Staff ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to participate in sporting competitions, for example tag rugby and cross country running. These activities have a positive effect on pupils' resilience, sense of achievement and work ethic. This is reinforced by residential visits, for example to a local outdoor centre, which develop pupils' physical and social skills effectively and nurture a love for the outdoors.

The school welcomes a range of interesting visitors to talk about their work and life experiences. For example, a parent relates their experience of trekking to Everest Base Camp and shares important information about map reading and how to tie ropes safely. These visits raise pupils' aspirations and support them in developing important values, such as commitment and perseverance.

In response to concerns about falling rates of attendance, the school has begun to take some beneficial steps to improve this aspect. Leaders have begun to improve pupils' and families' awareness of the importance of regular attendance, for example by sharing information via newsletters. Staff work with external agencies to provide appropriate support where pupils' attendance is a concern.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school and staff have a thorough understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. As a result, pupils feel safe and happy at school.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is a caring and compassionate leader. She has a clear vision for the school that is based on providing opportunity for all within a safe, nurturing environment. She has shared this vision successfully with pupils, staff and parents. As a result, there is an overwhelming feeling of belonging to a close-knit learning community where everyone supports, encourages and celebrates the achievements of others. The headteacher has high expectations of herself and others and aspires for the best well-being and outcomes for all pupils. The headteacher promotes a strong culture of safeguarding at the school and pupils feel safe and content whilst at work and play.

The headteacher is ably supported by a small but committed and conscientious team of staff. They work diligently to support pupils' well-being and provide learning opportunities that engage pupils successfully. Staff know their responsibilities well and aspire for the best outcomes for all pupils. Leaders ensure that there are appropriate arrangements for managing the performance of staff. Leaders link performance targets appropriately to the school's improvement priorities as well as individual staff members' developmental needs. The school

arranges a purposeful range of professional learning opportunities for staff. For example, staff work closely with local schools to develop a shared understanding of assessment and progression across the areas of the curriculum. This develops staff's ability to plan for developing pupils' skills more effectively over time.

Leaders ensure that there are suitable arrangements for monitoring provision and supporting improvement planning. They gather an appropriate range of evidence to evaluate the provision. For example, they observe lessons and discuss pupils' learning with them. Leaders analyse this information purposefully and, as a result, they have a suitable understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school's improvement plans focus well on local and national priorities, including implementing the requirements of Curriculum for Wales and reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment. Leaders monitor the impact of improvement plans on pupil outcomes regularly.

Governors are strong advocates of the school and provide an appropriate level of challenge and support for school leaders. They undertake a suitable range of monitoring activities. For example, they visit the school to talk to pupils about their work and scrutinise their books. They analyse the information from these monitoring activities purposefully and, as a result, they have an appropriate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors ensure that the school uses its resources appropriately, including its financial resources. For example, the school deploys the pupil development grant carefully to provide appropriate support to develop targeted pupils' literacy and numeracy skills as well as their emotional well-being. Governors promote a culture of safeguarding successfully and ensure that the school has effective arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

A notable feature of the school is the way leaders develop successful partnerships with parents and the wider community. The Parent Teacher Association works diligently to arrange and support school activities. For example, they provide the catering for the school's Christmas concert and arrange a sponsored walk to raise funds for the school. Parents and members of the community guide and support pupils to grow and harvest vegetables in the community garden located on the school grounds.

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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