



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

**A report on**

**Borderbrook School  
Talwrn Green  
Malpas  
Cheshire  
SY14 7LJ**

**Date of inspection: November 2017**

**by**

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

## About Borderbrook School

Borderbrook Anglican Voluntary Controlled School is an English-medium primary school in Wrexham. The school serves a rural area close to the English border. Since January 2016, the school and St. Paul's Church in Wales Voluntary Aided Primary School have formed the Maelor Church Schools Federation. Both schools share the same headteacher and governing body. Borderbrook Anglican Voluntary Controlled School was last inspected in June 2010. This is the first inspection of the school since the federation.

There are 29 pupils on roll, including a few part-time nursery pupils. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes. One class caters for foundation phase aged pupils and the other for pupils in key stage 2.

Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school states that a very few pupils are on the additional needs register. The percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals or on the additional needs register are much lower than the all Wales averages. All pupils are white British. No pupil speaks Welsh at home.

The headteacher has been in post since April 2012. She was appointed as headteacher to both schools in the federation in January 2016.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.  
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

## Summary

The school is a nurturing environment that builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem effectively. The way the school plans and delivers its personal and social curriculum is a strength, allowing pupils to explore their feelings and to discuss social and moral issues well. Nearly all pupils make good progress and achieve the expected outcomes and levels by the end of the foundation phase and key stage 2. However, the level of challenge pupils receive is not always successful in ensuring that they reach their potential, particularly the more able pupils. The school is successful in delivering many parts of its planned curriculum. However, there are weaknesses in the planning and provision to develop pupils' mathematical understanding. The headteacher has worked effectively and diligently to bring the staff and governors from both schools in the federation together as a united group. This supports a developing culture of teamwork successfully. Both schools in the federation share very similar strengths and areas for development.

<b>Inspection area</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Standards</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Wellbeing and attitudes to learning</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Teaching and learning experiences</b>	<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>
<b>Care, support and guidance</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Good</b>

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve the provision for mathematics and numeracy
- R2 Ensure that teaching challenges pupils to achieve to the best of their ability
- R3 Improve feedback to pupils so they know how to improve their work consistently
- R4 Ensure that monitoring activities focus more sharply on pupils' standards and the quality of teaching

## **What happens next**

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

## Main findings

### Standards: Good

Many pupils start school with language and number skills around those expected for their age. Nearly all pupils make good progress and achieve the expected outcomes and levels by the end of the foundation phase and key stage 2. However, the most able pupils do not always achieve the standards of which they are capable.

Across the school, pupils develop their speaking and listening skills well. Most pupils in the foundation phase listen closely to the contributions of adults and other pupils. They share their ideas effectively during whole class sessions and group activities. In key stage 2, pupils make strong progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. They listen courteously to the opinions of others and often offer reasoned and well thought out arguments if they disagree with an opinion. Pupils develop their confidence to speak publicly exceptionally well, for example when leading whole school worship or talking to an audience about their hobbies and interests.

Nearly all pupils enjoy reading and speak enthusiastically about books they have read individually or have studied as a class. In the foundation phase, pupils build an extensive bank of words that they recognise on sight. Key stage 2 pupils continue to develop their sight vocabulary and fluency. Across the school, pupils use a few other strategies to try to work out unknown words. However, a minority of pupils tend to skip over words that they do not recognise. This means that they lose the flow of the text. Many respond well to questions about the book they are reading and demonstrate that they understand the content. Pupils that are more able read with fluency, enthusiasm and expression. They talk animatedly about what they think will happen next in the story and show empathy towards characters. Older and more able pupils support and justify their answers and opinions by referring to aspects within the text.

Across the school, pupils use a wide and varied vocabulary to write well for a range of audiences and purposes. For example, foundation phase pupils write interesting questions for the Welsh dragon after he returned from going missing from the Welsh flag. Key stage 2 pupils develop their ideas maturely, for example when describing the best features of their school to visitors. Many pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the features of different types of writing. For example, foundation phase pupils write formal thank you letters to the paramedic after visiting the ambulance station and key stage 2 pupils write recounts, after a residential trip, that include relevant and interesting details, quotes from other pupils and a concluding statement. Pupils apply their literacy skills across the curriculum to a similar standard achieved in English lessons. They work hard to develop their handwriting skills and a majority of key stage 2 pupils use a joined, legible script. Most pupils make sound progress in developing their spelling and punctuation skills. However, they often make the same simple errors repeatedly.

A majority of pupils have strong numerical reasoning skills and they enjoy solving mathematical puzzles and problems. For example, many key stage 2 pupils understand which operations to use to solve two-step problems and demonstrate a

good understanding of mathematical terms. Overall, pupils make the expected progress in developing their mathematical skills. However, on occasion this progress is slowed by a weak grasp of key facts and concepts, such as key stage 2 pupils' recall of times tables and foundation phase pupils' understanding of place value. In the foundation phase, pupils develop their understanding of shape, space and measures appropriately. For example, they measure each other using non-standard units and then make comparisons. In key stage 2, pupils build on this steady start and older and more able pupils can carry out more complex calculations. For example, they calculate the area and perimeter of a pharaoh's pyramid. Pupils apply their numerical skills at a similar level across the curriculum.

Pupils in the foundation phase use simple drawing packages and programmable toys appropriately. In key stage 2, pupils work collaboratively to make electronic presentations to support and promote the work of chosen charities. Pupils are beginning to learn about coding and they show great enthusiasm when learning new skills. Pupils' knowledge of a few areas of the information communication and technology (ICT) curriculum, such as data handling and spreadsheets, is weaker.

Overall, many pupils make sound progress in developing their Welsh skills. In the foundation phase, many use familiar phrases competently and respond to instructions from teachers and staff appropriately. Across the school, most pupils enjoy developing a growing competence in using the language in a variety of situations in class. Generally, pupils read simple Welsh texts with a developing fluency, but often struggle to understand what they have read. Overall, by the end of keystage 2, pupils use familiar Welsh vocabulary competently in a basic range of sentence patterns that they practise regularly. A minority of pupils engage in simple conversations confidently.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good**

Pupils show very high levels of respect, care and concern for others. This is a strength of the school. The behaviour and attitude of nearly all pupils are exemplary in lessons and around the school. During the pupil led 'Wednesday Worship' all pupils listen with the same high level of respect that they do for adults. Nearly all pupils co-operate successfully. For example, during 'Welly Wednesday', foundation phase pupils build castles in the school's outdoor area and work together to carry long branches to make towers and drawbridges. Pupils respond positively to rewards and consequences. They develop their confidence and coping strategies successfully. For example, older pupils help to sort out disagreements on the yard at playtimes. All pupils feel safe at school and know they can approach staff if anything is worrying them. Nearly all pupils know how to keep themselves safe. For example, they know that they should not share personal information online.

Pupils have a strong and effective voice in the school. They are proud of their work and feel valued. The school council influences the work of the school well. Through questionnaires and discussions, councillors gauge the opinions of other pupils effectively. They make presentations about the work they do to the governing body. Other pupil-led groups, such as the eco committee, super ambassadors, health heroes and Criw Cymraeg, are well established and represent the views of pupils well. Pupils organise activities and fundraising events to support worthy causes, for example raising money for a campaign to support victims of the Manchester terrorist

attack and buying a water cleaning unit for an African village. As a result, they develop an understanding of their social responsibilities and become ethically informed and responsible citizens. Members of the school council from both schools in the federation took part in early discussions about Wrexham local authority's reorganisation plans. This gave pupils from both schools a valuable opportunity to discuss issues and voice their opinions.

Nearly all pupils are enthusiastic about their work in school. They show an interest in the topics they study and stay on task during lessons. In 'super learner weeks', pupils are beginning to contribute to their own learning by making suggestions about what to study. Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of how they can stay healthy by taking regular exercise and enjoy the early morning exercise session led by the 'health heroes' at the start of each day. Pupils collaborate effectively in pairs and small groups and show high levels of independence.

Attendance rates over the past few years have placed the school in the top 25% when compared with similar schools. Pupils arrive punctually at the start of the school day.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement**

All adults develop very strong working relationships with pupils. They employ positive behaviour management strategies that help pupils to settle to their tasks quickly. Teachers have clear classroom routines that pupils understand and follow well. They engage pupils effectively by providing learning experiences that capture pupils' interests and widen their knowledge and experiences. Teachers plan activities that encourage pupils to work co-operatively and collaboratively. They encourage pupils to use their thinking and independent learning skills well. Teachers ask a suitable range of questions that encourage pupils to recall their previous learning. Most adults provide pupils with purposeful explanations that help them to develop their understanding of new concepts and ideas.

In most classes, teachers adapt work to meet the wide range of abilities within the class. However, the level of challenge is not always successful in ensuring that pupils reach their potential, particularly the more able pupils. Across the school, teachers often try to spread themselves too thinly. They divide their time between too many groups rather than maintaining a specific teaching focus. Overall, the quality of teaching is adequate and needs improvement.

Across the school, staff provide pupils with useful verbal feedback during lessons. Most teachers' written comments show pupils what they have done well and make suitable suggestions for improvement. However, feedback does not pick up well enough on repeated errors in pupils' work, such as ongoing mistakes in basic punctuation and spelling. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to respond to teachers' marking and to think about the content of their work. There are a few opportunities for pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers. Pupils like the recently introduced checklists that help them to assess whether they have included all relevant features when writing in a particular genre.

Overall, the school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets requirements. The school's planning uses a thematic approach to help pupils to

make appropriate links in their learning across the different areas of the curriculum. The school plans worthwhile opportunities for pupils to decide what and how they learn. In the foundation phase, teachers make effective use of outdoor learning spaces to encourage pupils to be physically active or to develop skills using large tools safely. For example, 'Wellie Wednesdays' provide engaging opportunities for pupils to develop their skills, such as understanding mathematical language when comparing the length of sticks. In key stage 2, teachers plan an engaging curriculum based on topics such as the Second World War, the Tudors, Egyptians and rainforests. They provide valuable contexts for pupils to develop and apply their skills in real-life situations.

Teachers provide worthwhile and interesting opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum. For example, there are good opportunities for pupils to develop their higher-order reading skills when researching topics. Provision to develop pupils' ICT skills is developing appropriately. There are examples where the provision and planning for developing pupils' numeracy skills are appropriate. However, the provision and planning to develop pupils' mathematical understanding and numeracy skills across the curriculum are inconsistent. Overall, the lack of teaching time currently allocated to mathematics is a barrier to pupils making the best possible progress in the subject.

Provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is appropriate. Most teachers and teaching assistants are suitable language role models. They incorporate everyday Welsh in classrooms and around the school successfully. There are sound opportunities for pupils to speak and write Welsh, for example in specific lessons and in 'Helpwr Heddiw' sessions. Visits from Welsh artists and projects about Patagonia and traditional Welsh costumes develop pupils' understanding of Welsh culture successfully. Teachers plan valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures and about significant events around the world. For example, pupils learn about Christmas celebrations throughout Europe and reflect thoughtfully on how events in the news affect people's lives.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

The way the school plans and delivers its personal and social curriculum is a strength. During these sessions, pupils have useful opportunities to explore their feelings and discuss moral issues. This curriculum helps pupils to learn about the importance of tolerance and respect for other cultures and religions. Pupils benefit from the federation's strong links with local clergy and places of worship. For example, members of the Christian community regularly conduct whole school worship that encourages pupils to reflect on their actions and attitudes and to consider moral issues.

Staff know pupils extremely well and provide a nurturing environment that builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Across the federation, there are clear policies and procedures that staff apply consistently to ensure that all pupils receive strong levels of care, support and guidance. For example, the implementation of the federation's positive behaviour management policy leads to high levels of mutual respect and trust between pupils and staff.



Leaders analyse data and outcomes from standardised tests well to inform catch-up and support groups. This means that pupils in need of additional support receive timely interventions to improve, for example, their reading skills. Support staff benefit from appropriate professional development opportunities to help them deliver these programmes effectively. The school works purposefully with outside agencies and local authority teams to put in place strategies to support pupils identified as having additional learning needs. However, pupils' targets in individual education plans are often too broad and not specific enough to enable staff to measure progress easily.

The school has strong and supportive relationships with parents, who appreciate greatly the help their children receive. The school's parent-teacher association is instrumental in providing additional resources for pupils, for example to fund a music teacher to ensure that pupils receive whole class music tuition from a person with expertise in this area.

The school gives pupils many beneficial opportunities to develop their leadership skills. All key stage 2 pupils take on a leadership role, for example as playground buddies, e-cadets, super ambassadors or members of the school council. Pupils play an effective role in influencing the work of the federation, for example in developing the anti-bullying procedures. They are beginning to have a greater say in how and what they learn. For example, in 'super learning week', groups of pupils decide what learning activities they undertake and plan relevant activities for each area of learning. Older pupils take a lead role in planning 'Wednesday worships' sessions, which they lead with assurance and skill.

Pupils benefit from many worthwhile experiences that broaden their knowledge and experience. As part of the world of work week, pupils learn about career opportunities from a wide range of visitors. For example, staff from Chirk Castle and an airline pilot talk to pupils about their jobs and the skills necessary to be effective in their roles. This helps to raise pupils' aspirations. Pupils have plentiful and worthwhile opportunities to explore outside of their local area. For example, all key stage 2 pupils in the federation attend an outdoor pursuits centre for three days where they explore the natural environment and take part in team building activities, such as gorge walking and rock climbing. Year 5 and Year 6 pupils in the federation also visit Cardiff for three days to see the sights of the capital city and learn about Welsh history and culture by visiting St Fagans Museum of Welsh life and going underground at Big Pit in Blaenafon. Pupils also undertake many other worthwhile visits linked to the curriculum and areas of interest.

The school's provision to promote pupils' healthy eating and drinking is good. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

### **Leadership and management: Good**

Within a relatively short time, school leaders have established a suitable vision to support pupils' education and wellbeing across the federated schools. This ensures that the schools are calm and caring learning environments where nearly all pupils feel safe and supported. Leaders create a climate where pupils have a strong say in matters that affect them. As a result, pupils have many opportunities to take on responsibilities, for example in their work as super ambassadors.

The headteacher has worked effectively to bring the staff and governors from both schools together as a united group. This supports a developing culture of teamwork successfully. There is a suitable staffing structure and staff understand their roles and responsibilities well. Arrangements to distribute leadership responsibilities are developing appropriately. For example, there are sensible arrangements to delegate the leadership to senior staff in each school when the headteacher is off site. Staff with leadership roles have a positive impact on provision and pupils' standards. For example, leadership of literacy ensures that approaches to developing pupils' reading and writing skills are effective overall. Other leadership roles, such as the role of the additional learning needs co-ordinator, ensure that pupils receive additional support in a timely manner.

Senior leaders are beginning to use the federation arrangements successfully to improve pupils' experiences and wellbeing. For instance, they share expertise to improve outdoor learning experiences such as forest school activities. The school uses shared staffing arrangements well to reduce aspects of teachers' workloads. For example, they share responsibilities for standardising and moderating pupils' work at cluster meetings. In addition, the schools are beginning to benefit from efficiency savings, for instance when arranging transport for school trips. St Paul's school is starting to provide leadership to introduce a few creative elements to the curriculum successfully. This is beginning to improve provision to develop pupils' ICT and literacy skills in combination, for example through film making projects and the use of programming.

Leaders analyse pupil performance data effectively to identify suitable improvement priorities. They undertake an appropriate range of additional monitoring activities including observations of lessons, learning walks and scrutiny of pupils' work. However, when undertaking these activities, leaders make general evaluations of the types of provision on offer for pupils. They do not evaluate the impact of this work on the standards achieved or progress made by pupils well enough. This limits leaders' capacity to give teachers specific guidance to improve their teaching further.

Leaders show the capacity to implement improvement strategies successfully. For example, initiatives to develop pupils' higher-order reading skills are having a positive impact on standards. They have worked swiftly to address a declining trend in rates of pupils' attendance at St Paul's School by implementing successful strategies from Borderbrook. Effective performance management arrangements and a beneficial range of professional development opportunities for staff ensure that the schools makes progress towards their improvement targets. The schools work well with, and learn from, other local schools, for example through the 'super learner' approach where key stage 2 pupils plan and timetable their own learning activities.

The headteacher and governors monitor the schools' budgets diligently. They allocate funding appropriately to support improvement, for example to purchase ICT resources. They make suitable use of the pupil development grant. They work innovatively with partners to secure improvements to resources. For example, work with partners such as the company responsible for building a new prison has improved outdoor learning and play facilities at St Paul's and a partnership with a national power company at Borderbrook has improved the outside learning environment.

Governors support the development of the federation well, for example by working with the schools to develop joint policies for important aspect of provision, such as child protection and safeguarding. They have a secure understanding of the schools' improvement priorities and monitor progress towards achieving these appropriately, for example by undertaking learning walks. Governors hold leaders to account appropriately, for example through regular meetings and performance management arrangements.

## 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))

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

<b>Excellent</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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

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Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

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

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