



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

A report on

Leighton C.P. School

**Leighton
Welshpool
Powys
SY21 8HH**

Date of inspection: June 2023

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Leighton C.P. School

Name of provider	Leighton C.P. School
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	71
Pupils of statutory school age	63
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 23.0%)	15.3%
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 16.1%)	9.5%
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)	28/09/2015
Start date of inspection	12/06/2023

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

Leighton Community Primary is a welcoming school where pupils and their families are supported and nurtured. Leaders, including governors, have positive working relationships with the whole-school community and place a high priority on developing well-being. However, leaders do not evaluate the school's work robustly enough and as a result they do not always address important areas in need of improvement.

Staff have close working relationships with all pupils. They provide an engaging environment for pupils, which includes well-planned indoor and outdoor areas. Teachers plan a broadly suitable curriculum, which includes a range of experiences, including opportunities to enable pupils to develop an understanding of their community and what it means to be Welsh. However, teaching does not always engage all pupils successfully, and teachers do not always plan well enough to improve pupils' writing, numeracy and digital skills.

Most pupils are respectful towards staff and show courtesy to each other. Many work hard and have a positive attitude towards learning, although a few do not always listen attentively. The majority of pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills suitably, but generally the pace of teaching does not challenge all pupils well enough. As a result, pupils' progress as they move through the fluctuates too much and many do not achieve their full potential.

The school's systems for safeguarding pupils are not robust enough and there are important shortcomings in the school's culture of safeguarding.

Recommendations

- R1 Address the safeguarding concerns identified during the inspection
- R2 Improve leadership and self-evaluation in order to identify and address areas for improvement more accurately and promptly
- R3 Improve the pace and challenge of teaching
- R4 Improve pupils' progress within and across year groups, particularly their digital and numeracy skills across the curriculum

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress about 12 months after the publication of this report.

Main evaluation

Learning

When pupils first join Leighton Community Primary School, many have communication and social skills that are at or slightly above those expected for their age. During their time at the school, most make suitable progress from their individual starting points, including those with additional learning needs (ALN).

Most pupils develop strong speaking and listening skills. Younger pupils speak with confidence and are keen to discuss their work. Many older pupils are confident and articulate speakers and use a range of technical and expressive language effectively, for example when talking about their class topics. Many pupils listen well to adults and to each other and show increasing empathy for the speaker. However, a few pupils struggle to listen attentively and this means that they often miss out on explanations of what to do in lessons.

Many younger pupils read well and use their knowledge of letter sounds with growing confidence to help them to decode unfamiliar words. They develop a suitable range of reading strategies to decipher new words and their meaning, such as thinking about the context and considering what makes sense. The majority of older pupils read confidently and fluently. They read instructions for tasks competently and more able pupils read more challenging texts well. However, in a few instances, while fluency is strong, older pupils do not always demonstrate a deep understanding of the text they are reading.

A majority of pupils improve their writing skills appropriately. Younger pupils write in short sentences and are beginning to use punctuation suitably. Older pupils are beginning to write at length and for a range of purposes, for example when writing imaginative stories, or letters to their pen pals in Uganda. Most younger pupils use legible handwriting and present their work neatly. However, a minority of older pupils do not develop a fluent handwriting style and, at times, do not present their work with sufficient care. Many older pupils have a good understanding of the main features of different forms of writing, and correct and edit basic errors in their work effectively. However, although more able pupils often write skilfully, the majority of pupils do not make enough progress in improving the quality of their written work over time.

Many pupils make suitable progress overall in developing their mathematical skills and understanding. For example, many younger pupils use multiplication grids and number lines to multiply simple numbers confidently. Older pupils develop strong number skills and use them well in lessons, for example when solving simple problems or estimating and measuring the heights and circumferences of trees. However, older pupils do not apply their numeracy skills regularly enough, or at a high enough level in authentic contexts across the curriculum.

Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning about Wales and the Welsh language. Younger pupils respond with understanding to questions from the teacher and are beginning to use their understanding of the language to build simple sentences, for example when describing the weather. Older pupils hold simple conversations and

are beginning to build a useful vocabulary. However, in general pupils' progress in learning to speak Welsh is slow.

A majority of pupils demonstrate suitable digital skills. Younger pupils draw simple bar charts and pictograms to represent data, for example when representing the different bugs they have found around the school. Older pupils use the internet confidently to research information based on their class topics. They use presentation software suitably, linking text and images, for example when displaying information about healthy eating or dangers of smoking. However, pupils do not develop the full range of digital skills expected, including data, computational thinking and coding, due to a lack of opportunity.

Many pupils develop their creative skills well. For example, younger pupils make models of insects and create musical compositions using their imaginations when engaging in free play. Many older pupils take useful opportunities to develop their skills through independent learning tasks, for example when designing and making bird feeders from recycled materials.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils enjoy school and feel safe within its inclusive and caring ethos. They are happy to discuss any concerns with members of staff and feel they are listened to. This means that many pupils engage well in learning and develop as confident contributors to school life.

Many pupils persevere when they face difficulties in their work. For example, older pupils apply their own strategies independently or ask a friend before seeking support from an adult. Most pupils are kind to one other and know what to do and who to turn to if they feel upset. Most understand how to stay safe online, for example by not sharing personal information.

Across the school, many pupils behave well in class, at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Most pupils have a positive attitude towards their work and follow instructions appropriately. They listen to their peers and respect the right of others to have different opinions and ideas. Many pupils engage well with their tasks and work effectively on their learning. However, a few pupils become distracted when the learning does not challenge them appropriately or where the pace of lessons is too slow.

Most pupils respond positively to the opportunities they have to contribute to their class topics. For example, they work together to create mind maps at the beginning of the term, contributing purposefully by suggesting aspects of the topic that interest them, ideas of what and how to learn, and research they could carry out. Pupils appreciate that staff consider their ideas and are willing to include them in relevant activities, where appropriate.

Pupils enjoy the variety of activities on offer that support their well-being. For example, through being active in the forest school space or being part of 'Feel Good Friday', pupils learn key social skills and develop their understanding of sustainability. Most understand the importance of healthy eating and drinking and appreciate the

benefits of physical exercise. For example, many pupils participate with energy and enthusiasm during the daily mile.

Many pupils take an active part in the life of the school, particularly through the pupil voice groups. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously, develop a range of good leadership skills and are proud of their valuable contributions. These include leading whole-school assemblies and organising creative showcases such as a talent show. Many pupils develop effective entrepreneurial skills. For example, members of the eco council help to maintain the school garden and grow runner beans to sell to the local community. Pupil voice groups contribute well to the life of the school. For example, the school council leads the school effectively in fundraising for a range of charities. As a result, pupils have a very good understanding of social and global concerns.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school is developing a clear rationale for its curriculum, based on supporting and encouraging high levels of well-being. However, there is not enough focus on planning for pupil progress. Staff collaborate successfully to create interesting and engaging whole-school themes for learning. They encourage pupils to contribute meaningful ideas for lessons to personalise activities according to the needs and interests of pupils in their classes. Teachers plan experiences that help to develop pupils' understanding of their community and what it means to be Welsh. They bring these areas of the curriculum alive by inviting visitors to the school and taking pupils on purposeful visits, for example to local dairy farms to explore diversity in farming approaches.

Teachers' planning usually ensures that many pupils have opportunities to use their skills suitably across the curriculum in a range of contexts. They provide regular opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their oracy, writing and reading skills through their topic work, such as finding out about rainforests. However, teachers do not always offer enough opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum or plan sufficiently for pupils to learn a suitable range of digital skills. Staff across the school are beginning to model the Welsh language suitably and this has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes towards learning the language.

Teachers generally create appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their independence in learning. They enable pupils to choose between a range of challenges, which are beginning to provide them with useful opportunities to practise and apply their skills in different contexts across the curriculum, such as researching producers and consumers in a food chain. Teachers also provide opportunities for older pupils to explore their ambitions for the future. Pupils consider jobs that they would like to pursue, find out the skills they would need, and share their research, for example about becoming a stonemason, with their friends.

Most staff establish positive working relationships with their pupils and are strong role models. This encourages many pupils to co-operate well and engage suitably in their work. Teachers build upon pupils' prior learning well, for example when introducing new ideas, they reflect on how these link with previous work. However, in a minority of cases, teaching does not engage pupils well enough or challenge pupils to extend their thinking effectively. In these cases, the slow pace of lessons contributes to

pupils' poor behaviour and concentration when completing their work. Teachers and teaching assistants generally use questioning well to assess pupil understanding and provide appropriate support, but it does not always extend pupils' learning or provide sufficient challenge.

Teachers often provide pupils with helpful verbal feedback. For example, they identify what pupils do well and where they can make improvements to their work. Teachers generally provide success criteria for pupils to use when reflecting upon their work, which they use well to correct basic errors. Overall, however, feedback does not support pupils well enough to extend and improve the quality of their work. Teachers are beginning to develop an understanding of how well pupils are progressing over time. For example, they carry out regular pupil progress meetings with each other to discuss and identify those pupils at risk of underachievement or those who are more able.

In classrooms and other learning areas, many teaching assistants are deployed well and support pupils effectively. Staff create purposeful indoor and outdoor learning environments, which support learning suitably. For example, staff think carefully about the outdoor learning environment for younger pupils and how it can develop their imaginations through providing good opportunities for engaging and creative play.

Care, support and guidance

All staff contribute successfully to developing a happy, caring ethos in the school. They foster shared values such as care, kindness, fairness and respect well. This helps to create an environment where pupils feel they are valued members of the school community.

Staff provide a broad and relevant range of interventions to support pupils' well-being effectively. These include daily well-being check-ins and working with the local Women's Institute to create 'worry dolls' to help pupils to manage their emotions. There are clear systems in place to help pupils who struggle to control their behaviour or who are anxious. Specific staff members provide valuable support and guidance for these pupils. This helps them to regulate their emotions and to access their learning appropriately.

The school has appropriate arrangements for supporting pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and provides a range of effective interventions. The ALN co-ordinator works conscientiously with other staff members and external partners to ensure that there is suitable support for individuals and groups of pupils. Staff ensure that pupils have specific, measurable targets that are reviewed, shared and evaluated regularly. The school works beneficially with a small range of specialist services to secure additional resources to support pupils with a range of needs.

The school provides valuable opportunities that contribute well to developing pupils' ethical skills and help them relate to the experiences of children from schools across the world. For example, links with a school in Uganda provide effective opportunities for pupils to develop empathy and reflect on the needs and rights of others. There are suitable learning experiences for spiritual and moral development, including daily

acts of collective, which encourage pupils to reflect and consider other world religions.

The school ensures that pupils of all backgrounds and abilities take on leadership roles in a variety of purposeful groups. Pupils have worthwhile opportunities to participate in making decisions to improve the school. For example, members of the Criw Cymreig take an active role in developing playground games and the school council is actively involved in the recruitment process to employ new members of staff.

Staff foster productive relationships with parents. Parents appreciate this and enjoy playing their part in the school's life and work. For example, the friends of Leighton school raise money to purchase resources for use in the outdoor forest school area. Staff enable pupils to make strong contributions to the life of their community. They offer valuable opportunities for pupils to take part in local events, such as the annual Remembrance Day service. These opportunities help pupils to become conscientious and thoughtful citizens.

The school has beneficial arrangements to promote exercise and healthy eating and drinking and, as a result, most pupils understand the importance of choosing a healthy lifestyle. Older pupils support this work by taking responsibility for awarding stickers to pupils who make healthy choices at lunchtime. Overall, this has a positive impact on pupils' health and well-being.

The school promotes the Welsh culture and language positively. For example, all pupils have the opportunity to participate in the school eisteddfod and St David's Day celebrations. The school places a strong emphasis on providing a rich and varied range of educational visits that support the curriculum and engage pupils in their learning. These include local visits, swimming lessons for all, and a residential visit to an outdoor pursuits facility for older pupils, as well as a small range of extra-curricular clubs. These experiences provide valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about the local area and develop a range of skills.

Leaders understand the importance of keeping pupils safe. However, not all leaders are appropriately trained, and therefore policies and procedures are not understood well enough by leaders and staff. As a result, there are important shortcomings in the school's culture of safeguarding. The school encourages good levels of attendance among a majority of pupils following the impact of the pandemic. However, overall, the procedures for ensuring that pupils attend school and on time are inconsistent and they do not ensure that pupils whose attendance is poor are supported effectively enough to attend school regularly.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school that focuses on supporting and developing the emotional well-being of pupils. This, alongside its work to develop pupils' sense of belonging leads to pupils developing an understanding of community and feeling of place within their locality.

Leaders work well with partners to support the work of the school. For example, the staff benefit from professional learning with local schools to develop their

understanding of the Curriculum for Wales. As a result, leaders are beginning to develop their confidence to take forward improvements to the school's curriculum, such as encouraging pupils to contribute to what they would like to learn. Leaders value the support they have from the local authority and their improvement partner.

The school acknowledges the importance of developing leadership roles across the school to ensure that there is an equitable workload amongst teaching staff. Recent developments include sharing responsibilities for developing the curriculum and the areas of learning and experience. As a result of this development, staff are now better placed to deepen their understanding of the curriculum across the primary phase and refine their approaches to the Curriculum for Wales.

Recently, leaders have begun to resume monitoring activities at the school since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders and governors carry out a suitable range of activities to monitor the school's provision, such as lesson observations and looking at pupils' work. However, only a minority of these monitoring activities are conducted by senior leaders and teachers while members of the governing body carry out the majority of these activities. Whilst nearly all activities have a strong focus on aspects of pupil well-being, there is too little focus on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make. Too often, monitoring lacks evaluation, and does not make clear to staff the ways forward. In addition, there is very little involvement of staff in beneficial activities, such as book scrutiny. As a result, evidence to support the school's self-evaluation is weak and does not consider pupils' learning and the progress they make over time. This lack of purposeful monitoring limits leaders' understanding of the school's priorities for improvement.

Leaders identify priorities for improving aspects of the school's work. Currently, these priorities place a strong focus on aspects of the school that are already strong, such as elements of pupil well-being. However, they do not always focus well enough on important features, such as the steps required to improve aspects of teaching and outcomes for pupils. For example, leaders do not identify and address the lack of challenge in teaching.

Members of the school's governing body are keen to support the school and work closely with the headteacher. They frequently attend the school and participate in most of the school's monitoring activities. This means that they have a good understanding of some aspects of pupil well-being. However, governors do not have a strong enough understanding of the quality of the school's provision overall, in particular the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make over time. This limits their capacity to hold the school to account. Governors have sound understand of their duties in relation to promoting healthy eating and drinking and work hard with staff and pupils to encourage good habits. In addition, the governing body effectively oversees the finances of the school, including the Pupil Development Grant, and ensures that spending is appropriate.

Across the school, all staff have suitable job descriptions and understand their roles. They carry out their responsibilities diligently. Teachers participate in appropriate performance management arrangements and nearly all staff engage well in a small range of professional learning opportunities.

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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