



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

A report on

Ysgol Christchurch

**Ernest Street
Rhyl
Denbighshire
LL18 2DS**

Date of inspection: September 2023

by

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

About Ysgol Christchurch

Name of provider	Ysgol Christchurch
Local authority	Denbighshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	435
Pupils of statutory school age	335
Number in nursery classes	41
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%)	61.0%
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 16.1%)	31.0%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	7.5%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/05/2015
Start date of inspection	25/09/2023

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

Christchurch Community Primary School provides exceptional care for its pupils and their families. Their well-being and safety are the school's priority. A dedicated team of professionals ensures that pupils' emotional, social and health needs are met highly successfully. Through carefully planned intervention programmes and skilful, tailored support, they enable nearly all pupils to engage successfully with learning. Leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the school's safeguarding procedures robustly and act decisively. As a result, pupils feel safe and valued.

Often, pupils' skills when they start school are well below what is expected for their age. Nevertheless, during their time in school, most pupils make at least appropriate progress in their learning. Staff work conscientiously to develop pupils' confidence and ability to communicate through talking and writing in English and in Welsh. They make particularly strong progress in their reading and enjoy sharing books and stories with adults.

Nearly all pupils behave well. They are respectful of staff, visitors and each other. Many work successfully at their learning tasks and a few, when given the opportunity, enjoy taking responsibility for moving their own learning forward. However, overall, pupils do not develop well enough as independent learners. At times, staff over-direct pupils' learning or pitch their activities either too high, or too low.

A particularly strong aspect of the school's practice is its work with external partners to enhance pupils' learning experiences and to support family and community engagement. Leaders and staff are proactive in securing grant funding. They use this purposefully to improve the school's resources and to open pupils' eyes to the opportunities available to them in their adult lives. They also, with governors' support, put in place valuable initiatives to support families who are struggling financially.

The headteacher and governing body provide strong and effective leadership. Leaders and governors identify most of the school's strengths and areas for improvement accurately. They recognise the need to improve pupils' mathematical understanding, which is often weak, and pupils' ability to apply their literacy, numeracy and digital skills in their work across the curriculum. Having driven a highly effective strategic approach to the development of the school's provision for well-being, leaders are now beginning to turn their attention to improving the quality and consistency of teaching and assessment.

Recommendations

- R1 Develop the strategic leadership of teaching and assessment to ensure improvements to the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in mathematics and writing
- R2 Improve provision for pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum

R3 Ensure that all pupils have meaningful opportunities to develop as independent learners

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 Christchurch Community Primary School, most pupils, including the notable proportion eligible for free school meals and those from low-income households, make appropriate or better progress from their starting points. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), make strong progress against their individual targets. However, in a few aspects of learning, particularly in mathematics, pupils do not make as much progress as they could.

When pupils start school, most have personal, social and communication skills that are significantly below those expected for their age. In the nursery, most have poor speech and language skills, with many not yet toilet trained. Nearly all nursery pupils have had negative experiences in their early lives, such as exposure to traumatic situations. From this very low starting point, pupils' personal, social and listening skills develop well. By Year 2, most pupils listen appropriately, and many have developed the confidence to respond suitably to adults. In general, most pupils continue to make good progress in their verbal communication skills as they move through the school. However, a very few continue to struggle to speak clearly and, generally, older pupils lack confidence to engage in discussion and debate.

There is a positive culture of reading embedded across the school and this impacts positively on the strong progress in reading that many pupils make. Younger pupils develop sound phonological knowledge and use this suitably to help them to read simple texts. Many older pupils become confident, fluent, and expressive readers. By Year 6, they use their reading skills effectively to understand the meaning of increasingly challenging vocabulary. They reflect maturely on what they have read, making thoughtful inferences and deductions.

Most pupils make suitable progress in developing their writing skills. The youngest pupils experiment with early mark making and learn to form letters within a supportive and relaxed learning environment. Older pupils write appropriately for different purposes and audiences and they choose interesting vocabulary to engage the reader. While a majority punctuate their work and spell accurately, a minority of pupils do not present their written work well. They make too many errors and do not consistently redraft and edit their work to make improvements. Overall, many pupils' ability to write at length and apply their skills in other areas of the curriculum is underdeveloped.

Across the school, through the many opportunities they have to listen to adults, most pupils make good progress in developing their understanding of the Welsh language. With encouragement, younger pupils enjoy singing songs and respond successfully to simple questions in Welsh. By revisiting language patterns regularly, older pupils develop the confidence in speaking the language. For example, in Year 4, pupils extend their verbal responses by using connectives to convey their likes and dislikes. Most pupils enjoy hearing simple phrases that their peers speak in other languages, such as Ukrainian, Polish and Tamil.

A majority of younger pupils develop a sound understanding of number, shape and data through practical mathematical activities. For instance, in the reception class, pupils create their own 'ant rulers' to measure objects they find in the outdoors using non-standard units, as part of their minibeast topic. Pupils with ALN use multi-sensory approaches appropriately to help develop their understanding of place value. By the time they reach Year 6, a majority tackle age-appropriate calculations using taught methods accurately. In a few instances, older pupils apply their mathematical skills well in real-life contexts. For example, they learn about profit and loss by making and selling bird boxes as part of an enterprise project. However, in most classes, a few pupils have weak mathematical skills and, generally, pupils do not use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems in different contexts. Most pupils' reasoning skills are not well developed and they do not apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum well enough.

Most pupils' digital skills develop appropriately from low starting points. Younger pupils use tablets and interactive whiteboards confidently to play games to support their early literacy and numeracy development. Older pupils use online learning platforms and a range of programs to record and present their work. In Year 6, pupils use audio and visual digital tools effectively to create an engaging film about mental health. However, in general, pupils' use of spreadsheets and databases, and their ability to apply digital skills in their work across the curriculum, is at an early stage.

Most pupils develop their creative skills effectively and enjoy doing so. Younger pupils experiment with creating models using clay and recyclable materials, while older pupils produce attractive images, using watercolours and mixed media. For example, in Year 5, pupils talk successfully about the artistic style of Romero Britto, a Brazilian artist who grew up in poverty. They reflect appropriately on how the artist uses colour and line in combination to create vibrant abstract artwork as an expression of hope and dreams, when creating their own pieces.

Through the regular opportunities provided for outdoor learning, most pupils make good progress in developing their physical skills. The youngest pupils move confidently around the indoor and outdoor areas, developing good co-ordination and balance. Most older pupils enjoy participating in physical activity during lessons and develop a progressively broader range of skills, including speed and footwork, through boxing sessions in a local gym.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are proud of their school. They feel safe and secure within its positive and caring environment, confident that staff will listen to their concerns and deal with any problems that arise.

Nearly all pupils work and play well together. They are polite, courteous, and respectful towards each other, staff, and visitors. Many pupils have a good understanding of children's rights and reflect on why there is a need for rules and rights in school and in their community. Many pupils, including those with ALN, are keen to undertake leadership roles. They carry out their responsibilities enthusiastically and, by doing so, make a valuable contribution to the school's life and work. For example, the 'mini police officers' play an important role in keeping other pupils safe on the school playgrounds. The school council has worked closely with school leaders to develop school rules and behaviour policies, and to share and reinforce these expectations with pupils in all classes. As a result, most pupils behave well. Pupils write their own newsletter and this helps them to celebrate the school's achievements with the whole community.

Nearly all pupils know how to keep both their bodies and minds fit and healthy. Older pupils understand the importance of a balanced diet. They enjoy creating a menu and shopping for items within a budget to cook a healthy meal in the school's kitchen. Pupils participate in a variety of physical activities with enthusiasm, including through extra-curricular clubs, such as rugby and boxing, and sessions with Wrexham football club. Most pupils know how to keep themselves safe online.

In most classes, pupils settle to activities quickly when they arrive in school. Many pupils draw on strategies to support their own emotional well-being effectively, understanding the need to identify their feelings, and to be ready to learn at the start of each day. In a few instances, pupils rise to the challenge of learning independently and are successful in focusing effectively on their tasks. For example, older pupils use helpful feedback from teachers to move their learning forward. However, too often pupils struggle to persevere and become disheartened quickly if they do not succeed at their first attempt.

The number of pupils persistently absent continues to be a concern for the school. Pupils with additional learning needs have a notably higher rate of absence compared to others.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school is developing a broad and balanced curriculum that focuses suitably on its local context and pupils' well-being. All stakeholder groups have contributed to the curriculum vision and have influenced its content. The school enriches its curriculum well with visits to the local area and further afield. For example, pupils carry out environmental studies on the local beach, visit supermarkets to learn about healthy eating and travel to Norway to experience life in another country. This approach enables pupils to develop their learning successfully in familiar contexts and introduces them to new surroundings that broaden their horizons.

The school also uses its community links to enhance and enrich the learning experiences of pupils and to reduce the impact of poverty. For example, pupils work with a local company to learn about themes, such as Welsh history and recycling, through an interesting range of digital activities, including coding and robotics. The school provides pupils with a range of experiences to learn about the educational opportunities available to them as they become older and to develop their aspirations. For example, through a partnership project with Llandrillo College, pupils

and their parents engage in science-related workshops, using specialist equipment, linked to their topic of space. All pupils have access to a purposeful range of resources to support, scaffold and enhance their learning. This includes good provision to support the development of pupils' skills in the outdoors. For example, for younger children there are wooden trails, tyres, large plastic pipes, crates and other climbing equipment to build stamina and dexterity.

Staff make good use of a range of strategies to ensure that pupils with additional needs, or English as an additional language, can access the school's curriculum in line with their stage of development. Support staff carry out their roles well when assisting pupils in their learning within the classroom and through specialised smaller group, or one-to-one teaching sessions. They provide sensitive and well-timed support, which enables pupils to engage more readily with their learning. Learning support assistants are proud of the role they play in the school, and teachers and leaders hold them in high regard. The school's bespoke 'Hafen' provision enables pupils with specific needs to access a stimulating curriculum that has been adapted beneficially to suit their needs and interests.

A strong sense of Welsh culture permeates the school and staff and pupils value the language highly. Most staff are positive role models with a few having benefited from the Welsh sabbatical scheme. Teachers provide pupils with rich and valuable Welsh learning experiences. Daily sessions are often delivered with passion, and, as a result, most pupils engage enthusiastically with language learning.

Nearly all staff foster highly respectful relationships with pupils and create positive conditions for effective learning. They manage pupils' behaviour skilfully, knowing when and how to de-escalate situations, if they arise. In the minority of cases where teaching is most effective, staff demonstrate strong subject knowledge, have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and meet pupils' learning needs successfully through appropriate support and challenge. Many teachers provide pupils with valuable verbal feedback during lessons, addressing errors and misconceptions swiftly. In a few classes, teachers use this ongoing form of assessment successfully to identify and plan carefully for the next steps in pupils' learning. However, overall, the quality and impact of teaching and assessment across the school are too variable.

While establishing its curriculum, the school has not focused well enough on developing the quality of teaching. As a result, there is a lack of coherence and consistency in approaches across classes, which hinder the progress pupils make from year to year. Where teaching is less effective, staff do not always draw on a range of appropriate strategies or develop pupils' independent learning skills, such as encouraging them to collaborate on paired and group activities. In these instances, pupils' learning is often overly directed, or they engage in low-level tasks, such as colouring. Teachers do not always plan tasks that are suitably challenging for pupils and, too often, they are either too easy or too hard. In mathematics, the school's chosen approach limits the progress made by a minority of pupils.

Whole-school planning clearly identifies the progress pupils should make in applying their knowledge, understanding and skills across the areas of learning and experience. While teachers currently provide a few suitable opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy skills, such as reading for information, provision to use their

writing, numeracy and digital skills across other areas of learning is in the early stage of development.

Care, support and guidance

The school has a welcoming, inclusive and friendly ethos. Staff and most pupils embrace its motto, 'making a difference', through their daily activities. The school ensures that pupils from different groups, such as those with ALN and those who are care-experienced, have the opportunity to contribute successfully to the life and work of the school through its various leadership groups. The school values pupils' views highly, monitoring their responses to surveys carefully and talking to them through regular 'check in' sessions.

The whole-school approach to pupil, family and staff well-being is a significant strength. Leaders and staff place a high priority on addressing the emotional, health and social needs of all pupils and have implemented extremely effective arrangements to do so. For instance, at the beginning of the academic year, or when new pupils arrive in the school, the well-being manager and members of her team visit classes to observe pupils in formal and informal contexts, and to talk to teachers. This, along with the effective use of assessment information, means they build up a comprehensive picture of pupils' needs quickly and use this to identify and tailor the support they provide. This well-coordinated approach has a strong impact on individual pupils' personal development and their ability to engage with learning.

Provision to support pupils with additional learning needs is effective and the school has developed helpful universal learning provision in classrooms that all pupils can access. Learning support staff deliver a range of beneficial intervention programmes skilfully. For example, carefully structured and well-resourced one-to-one sessions support many pupils' speech and language development successfully. In addition, the school's 'Hafan' classroom provides a safe and calm environment for a very few pupils with individual support plans, who often find working in a busier classroom overwhelming. Staff meet the needs of these pupils very well through high-quality support, nurture and the stimulating learning experiences they provide.

The additional learning needs co-ordinator sets beneficial personal targets for pupils identified as having an additional learning need. Staff monitor and evaluate these pupils' progress regularly to identify the next steps in their learning. As a result, most make good progress against the targets in their individual development plans.

The school has strong partnerships with a wide range of outside agencies that help them to provide effective support and guidance for pupils and their parents. It also provides beneficial opportunities for families to meet each week to talk informally with staff and enjoy social time in the 'Pantri Bach' community hub and food bank. This safe space supports those who are vulnerable to seek advice and guidance, as well as offering a weekly opportunity to stock up on essential food and household items. The headteacher and a support teacher work closely with 'The Oak Tree Centre', a local non-maintained setting. This helps them to know families well and have a clear understanding of their children's individual needs, abilities and preferences before they join the nursery class. As pupils move through the school, teachers use a range of suitable approaches to ensure that pupils' transition between classes is successful.

There are appropriate arrangements for developing pupils' spiritual and ethical beliefs, for instance through acts of collective worship where pupils reflect on values and the importance of respecting others. Older pupils learn how to negotiate and compromise through structured opportunities to discuss how to resolve their differences. While staff help pupils to understand the needs of others as members of a diverse world through informal contexts, planning for this is at an early stage of development.

Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Staff ensure that pupils who are experiencing poverty, or seeking refuge, are not restricted from accessing a broad range of experiences due to financial constraints. For example, Ukrainian pupils receive weekly ukelele lessons. Through beneficial partnerships with local businesses and education settings, pupils have rich opportunities to learn about careers in practical 'World of Work' projects. This helps them to begin to consider possible career choices for later life and helps to raise their aspirations.

Christchurch Community Primary School shows an exceptional level of commitment to keeping learners safe through its culture, ethos and the learning experiences it provides. It has well-established monthly 'multi-agency panel' meetings, where professionals from a range of external services share information and co-ordinate the network of support they offer to pupils and families. This helps to mitigate risks to those who are most vulnerable successfully.

The school has rigorous systems for monitoring pupils' attendance and contacts parents in a timely manner when there are concerns. Staff work closely with families and outside agencies to improve pupils' attendance and regularly tailor the support to meet their needs. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, improving the attendance of pupils, and particularly those with ALN, remains a priority for the school.

There is a well-embedded approach to educating pupils about bullying and the impact it can have on children and young people. Although incidents are rare, there are robust and supportive processes to deal with these and to communicate with parents. Leaders analyse the school's information about different aspects of safeguarding effectively. This enables them to identify any patterns or trends over time, and to monitor the impact of its work.

Leadership and management

Leaders and governors have established an extremely inclusive school community where a dedicated team of adults take exceptional care of all pupils. The school aims to inspire pupils to have high aspirations, to teach them respect for each other, and to guide them to make positive choices during their lives.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide strong and purposeful leadership. They value highly the contribution all staff make towards ensuring that the school is a safe and happy community for its pupils. The headteacher places a strong focus on building leadership capacity across the school so staff understand their roles and responsibilities well and fulfil their duties conscientiously. This has had an outstanding impact on the provision for pupils' well-being. Effective systems and processes, coupled with strong support and a comprehensive programme of

professional learning for all staff, ensures that they are equipped well to meet pupils' diverse social, emotional and behavioural needs.

Governors play an active and supportive role in the life of the school, using their range of experiences and expertise successfully to support the school and its community. They have a thorough understanding of the school's context and work effectively with leaders to promote a strong culture of safeguarding. They share a common moral purpose with leaders and staff to ensure equity for pupils, irrespective of their background. Governors secure sponsorship and donations to support families' health and well-being through, for example, the provision of the 'Pantri Bach' food bank, and by ensuring that there are appropriate arrangements to promote pupils' healthy eating and drinking.

Governors engage enthusiastically with the school's programme of self-evaluation activities. This gives them valuable first-hand knowledge of the school's strengths and a good understanding of the rationale for the areas for improvement identified in development planning. They have a secure understanding of important issues, such as pupils' attendance, and hold leaders to account through a healthy balance of support and challenge. They monitor staffing and finances appropriately and ensures that designated funding, such as the pupil development grant, is used purposefully to improve provision for pupils. Senior leaders and staff are proactive in applying for grants to support the school's work in addressing national educational priorities, such as tackling poverty. This has enabled the school to provide multi-functional rooms where community-run and school-led activities support families' health and well-being successfully. They also use grant funding effectively to enrich pupils' learning with experiences they might not otherwise have. For example, all Year 5 pupils take part in a week-long sailing course at a local yacht club.

The school knows families very well and communication with them is a notable strength. Leaders seek parents' views and respond quickly and sensitively to any concerns they raise about their children or share about their home circumstances. This includes supporting families who are experiencing poverty, or those who have complex needs, by drawing on their strong partnerships with external agencies and health services. As a result, parents feel comfortable approaching the school for advice, and are confident that someone will help them.

Leaders use a wide range of evidence to develop their understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, such as pupils' mathematical, digital and Welsh language skills, and their ability to write at length. Although the school's evaluations are frank, leaders do not always identify clearly the impact their improvement actions have had on the development of pupils' skills. Staff have appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of the Curriculum for Wales, through attending cluster meetings and regional events. However, there has not been sufficient emphasis on improving the quality of teaching. Overall, the school does not have a clear enough vision for the strategic development and leadership of teaching and learning.

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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Publication date: 27/11/2023