



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

A report on
Gwernymynydd C.P. School

**Godre'r Coed
Gwernymynydd
Mold
Flintshire
CH7 4DT**

Date of inspection: January 2024

by

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

This inspection was undertaken as part of pilot inspection arrangements. As a result, this report may be slightly different in format to other published reports for providers in the sector.

About Gwernymynydd C.P. School

Name of provider	Gwernymynydd C.P. School
Local authority	Flintshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Religious character	N/A
Number of pupils on roll	73
Pupils of statutory school age	52
Number in nursery classes	12
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%)	7.2%
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%)	8%
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	01/02/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	14/06/2016
Start date of inspection	22/01/2024

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.

Summary

Leaders have brought two schools together as a safe and nurturing learning community where pupils feel valued and flourish in their development as caring citizens. They have focused well on developing consistency of experience for pupils across the two sites. This is a notable achievement, especially given the very high rates of staff turnover in recent times. Leaders are beginning to take advantage of the opportunities that the federation arrangements present, for example to enable staff to plan joint educational visits and topic work.

Relationships between staff and pupils are extremely beneficial and contribute positively to pupils' well-being. Standards of pupils' behaviour are excellent and they generally engage positively with the learning experiences provided for them. Teaching ensures that most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make suitable overall progress during their time at school. Progress is most evident in pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills. They generally use these skills well to support learning in other curriculum areas, for example when finding out about the Celts and Welsh history. However, the school's curriculum does not always include a wide enough range of learning experiences. For example, opportunities for physical education and expressive arts are infrequent and teaching does not ensure that pupils develop their Welsh language skills progressively as they move through school.

Where leaders focus their efforts, for example to improve teaching of mathematics, they show the capacity to bring about positive change. However, over time, leaders have not always focused their work well enough on improving teaching and learning. This means that provision for younger pupils does not always match their developmental needs or interests well enough and that teaching for older pupils does not always challenge them to achieve as well as they could.

Recommendations

We have made three recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Improve teaching and the learning experiences provided for pupils from Nursery to Year 2
- R2 Improve the leadership and monitoring of teaching to ensure that teachers consistently make the best use of teaching time and provide the right level of support and challenge for pupils
- R3 Ensure that pupils access a suitably broad range of learning experiences that include opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills progressively as they move through school

What happens next

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

Main findings

School leaders have succeeded in bringing two schools together with a shared sense of purpose. They have achieved this in the face of notable challenges over recent times. These include recovery following the pandemic and exceptionally high levels of staff turnover. Leaders ensure that pupils, adults and parents have an equitable experience regardless of which school they attend. Across the two schools, there is very little difference in the effectiveness of leadership or provision. This means that pupils' attitudes to learning, their progress and well-being in both schools are extremely similar overall.

Adults place a high priority on establishing and maintaining positive working relationships with pupils. These relationships underpin pupils' confidence to engage fully with school life and ensure that pupils feel that they are an important member of the school community. Adults model the behaviours they expect from pupils effectively. Pupils in all classes respond well to these expectations. They show exceptional levels of empathy and maturity and take the responsibility for the care and well-being of themselves and other pupils very seriously.

Cameo: Pupils have taken responsibility for designing, implementing and monitoring the school's behaviour policy. They identified a range of specific behaviours and organised these in a scale from least to most positive and agreed appropriate rewards and sanctions. They ensure that all members of the school community understand the consequences of positive and negative behaviour and that the approach to behaviour management is implemented consistently. Standards of behaviour are exemplary. Importantly, pupils understand the difference that their voice and work has made to pupils' behaviour, their school experience and the learning environment.

Pupils develop a good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. For example, they know the benefits of a healthy diet and the importance of working safely online. Educational visits to places such as Danger Point develop this understanding further by supporting pupils to be aware of risks in everyday life.

Generally, pupils start school with good communication skills in English. From an early age, they use these skills appropriately to talk about their learning. Older pupils use language with increasing sophistication to explain their ideas clearly, for example in response to specific questions. However, pupils have few opportunities to engage in extended class discussions or debates and many are less confident to express their personal views or to justify their opinions.

Most pupils develop as confident readers. Most younger pupils apply their knowledge of letter sounds to begin reading simple texts. Teachers model reading effectively in class and provide focused practice in small group reading sessions to develop pupils' fluency and understanding successfully. Over time, this strengthens pupils' ability to infer meaning and to consider what they read critically. Most older pupils use their reading skills efficiently to support their wider learning and show enjoyment in reading for pleasure.

Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop and use their writing skills for a broad variety of worthwhile purposes. As they move through the school, most pupils write competently to convey information and to express their ideas imaginatively. However, teachers do not always have high enough expectations for the standards of pupils' writing. They miss opportunities to provide high quality examples of effective writing or specific individual guidance in lessons to challenge pupils' thinking or support improvement.

In the few instances where teaching is particularly effective, teachers establish a clear focus for learning and set high expectations for pupils' achievement. In the most engaging lessons, teachers often use 'hooks' that capture pupils' interest and motivate them to succeed. Where used well, recently introduced strategies such as reflection periods during lessons are beginning to enable teachers to highlight what pupils do well and what they need to focus on more sharply to improve. In the best instances, teachers use this information skilfully to adapt their teaching to respond to pupils' immediate needs and to provide direct feedback that enables pupils to move their learning forward successfully. Leaders have worked with teachers to develop a consistent approach to providing written feedback to pupils. Teachers work in accordance with leaders' expectations. However, pupils rarely respond to feedback to bring about improvements to the quality of their work. Leaders do not always keep a sharp enough eye on the difference that improvement initiatives, such as this, make to pupils' progress.

Leaders are working to improve pupils' understanding of Welsh heritage, culture and language. They provide opportunities for Cwriw Cymraeg to lead assemblies that aim to boost pupils' awareness and use of the Welsh language. However, provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is not strong. It does not ensure that pupils learn the language progressively as they move through the school. A few adults model the Welsh language very well for pupils but, overall, pupils do not spend enough time speaking Welsh to become familiar and confident with their use of it.

Most pupils make effective use of their digital skills to support and enhance their learning. For example, teachers enable pupils to use suitable apps to handle data and to interpret information efficiently. They provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to use their digital skills imaginatively, for instance by creating movies that showcase their learning and promote understanding about the school in the wider community. Most pupils make beneficial use of digital platforms to practise and reinforce their basic skills. Teachers are beginning to broaden pupils' digital skills to improve their understanding of the use of databases and spreadsheets.

Leaders use a few sources of first-hand information appropriately to identify opportunities for improvement. For instance, they have used data from national assessments to evaluate strengths and areas for development in pupils' numeracy skills. This work has led to improvement. Over the past few years, leaders have invested time and finance to improve the school's mathematical provision. They have also facilitated suitable professional learning opportunities. This has led to a more consistent and systematic approach to teaching mathematics. Most adults now model mathematical terms and language well and encourage pupils to explain their method and thinking when working to solve problems. Overall, pupils make suitable progress in developing their mathematical knowledge and understanding and when applying their numerical and reasoning skills across the curriculum. On occasion, adults miss opportunities to model how they might approach and solve mathematical problems or to use the many practical resources available to improve pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts further.

Pupils in the foundation learning provision follow established routines appropriately. They follow adults' instructions respectfully, and enjoy their interactions with adults and their peers. They generally engage appropriately with the experiences provided for them and respond particularly well to any opportunities to explore resources independently or with friends. However, not all adults have a strong understanding of child development and the philosophy that underpins foundation learning. They do not enable meaningful, authentic learning experiences regularly enough. There are limited opportunities for pupils to learn through play or to follow their own interests. Overall, adults do not use observations and assessments of pupils' development, learning and progress well enough to plan provision. Too often younger pupils, spend time completing challenges, worksheets and activities that do not match their needs or interests well enough.

Leaders have cited improving foundation learning provision as a priority in previous school improvement plans. This has led to visible changes to the indoor and outdoor environments. However, they have not brought about sufficient change to the professional practice within these environments, for instance through targeted professional learning. In general leaders, at all levels, do not focus sharply enough on making teaching as good as it could be. This means that pupils do not always make the progress they could.

School leaders take suitable action to address most national priorities. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is effective and supports these learners to make suitable progress in relation to their individual learning goals.

Staff plan collaboratively to deliver their interpretation of Curriculum for Wales. Pupils receive many purposeful opportunities to apply their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. They participate in inspiring projects, for instance to learn about the Celts and the history of Wales. These experiences are engaging and boost pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Increasingly, teachers take advantage of opportunities to teach on both sites and to enable pupils from both schools to work and participate in educational visits together. However, provision for a few areas of learning and experience, such as Expressive Arts, is less well-developed. Opportunities within the curriculum for physical education and music are limited.

School leaders, including governors, monitor and use finances diligently. They take advantage of opportunities for financial efficiencies that federation presents. They use grant funding appropriately, for example to mitigate the impact of social disadvantage. Arrangements to involve parents in the life and work of the school are effective. Parents value the regular and timely communication from school and opportunities to learn about their child's school experience and progress.

Statutory compliance

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including use of the pupil development grant.

The school's arrangements for site security do not give any cause for concern.

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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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