



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

A report on

Maesyrhandir C.P. School

**Newtown
Powys
SY16 1LQ**

Date of inspection: June 2022

by

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

About Maesyrhandir C.P. School

Name of provider	Maesyrhandir C.P. School
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	139
Pupils of statutory school age	108
Number in nursery classes	N/A
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 [SECTOR] is [xx]%)	47.1%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in [SECTOR] is [xx]%)	55.6%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	15.7%
Date of headteacher appointment	April 2013
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	October 2012
Start date of inspection	13/06/2022
This information differs slightly to the PLASC information shown elsewhere, due to the fact that PLASC figures include nursery provision which is not part of the school, and was not inspected in this inspection	

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

The school provides a welcoming and inclusive environment where nearly all pupils feel safe and most enjoy attending regularly.

Teachers and leaders have focused appropriately on pupils' well-being as they return to school following the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers and teaching assistants deliver a good range of interventions to support pupils' emotional and mental health and this is having a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing. Staff know their pupils well and match this support effectively to the needs of individual pupils. Staff have a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour and pupils understand and respect this process, knowing that they will be dealt with fairly when disputes arise.

The support for pupils with additional learning needs is strong. The specialist centre and nurture class provide bespoke support for pupils who need additional support with learning or with their social or emotional wellbeing.

Pupils develop appropriate literacy and numeracy skills as they move through the school. Pupils' reading skills have improved recently and staff have identified accurately the need to focus on improving pupils' writing skills. Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to use these skills in a range of contexts however, the skills pupils use in their work across the curriculum do not always match the levels achieved in their English and mathematics work. Teachers across the school provide verbal feedback to pupils to help them to know what they have done well and what they need to improve. However, written feedback is less effective.

The headteacher leads the school effectively. She has established a culture where all staff feel valued and are proud of the work they do at the school. Leaders generally identify areas for improvement accurately, although monitoring and evaluation activities do not focus closely enough on the standards that pupils achieve or the progress that they make. Members of the governing body know the school well and provide good levels of support and challenge for the school's leaders.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve monitoring and evaluation activities and ensure that they focus firmly on pupils' learning
- R2 Ensure that teachers provide learning experiences that challenge pupils appropriately and support skill development
- R3 Improve pupils' writing skills
- R4 Ensure that feedback to pupils helps them to know what they do well and what they need to improve
- R5 Work with the local authority to address the safeguarding concern identified during the inspection

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils start in the reception class with literacy and numeracy skills below those expected for their age. During their first year at school, many begin to make good progress. They listen well to the adults they are working with. Many speak clearly when talking to adults, for example when listing the fruit they put into their shopping trolley and asking to buy food items in a shopping game. A few pupils give good accounts of the books they are reading and use their knowledge of letters and sounds effectively to help them to read. Many are beginning to form letters and numbers accurately and to write familiar words such as their name. They develop appropriate number skills and use these successfully, such as when buying items with coins up to the value of 5p.

Many pupils in all year groups listen well to adults and to each other. Pupils throughout the school have suitable speaking skills. Many younger pupils speak confidently, for example, when discussing notable world buildings and structures. Most older pupils express themselves clearly, for example when talking about the visits they have made to places of interest in Newtown. However, across the school, a minority of pupils are less confident when talking aloud.

Most pupils in the specialist centre listen well to each other and to adults. They join in well with discussions, for example talking about times they have been kind to one another or explaining the meaning of words such as melting and condensation. A few pupils read aloud and write simple words and sentences appropriately.

A majority of pupils make suitable progress in developing their Welsh language skills. Younger pupils listen to adults speaking using familiar words and phrases and respond to these appropriately. In Year1 pupils use Welsh words in their shopping game and know that *os gwelwch yn dda* means please. However, the Welsh skills of pupils in the middle of the school have been affected by the pandemic and they use similar vocabulary, showing limited progress in developing Welsh speaking skills. In Year 6 pupils increase their knowledge of Welsh words. For example, they use Welsh to explain their choices for lunch.

As they progress through the school, many pupils develop suitable reading skills. Younger more able pupils read fluently and with good expression. Many older pupils read at an appropriate level for their age. They use these skills effectively, for example to research the time that different planets take to orbit the sun.

Many pupils develop appropriate writing skills. By the time they reach Year 6, many use basic sentence punctuation such as full stops and capital letters accurately and are beginning to use a wider range of punctuation including apostrophes for contractions and bullet points in lists. Most form letters and spell familiar words accurately and use a neat, printed script to present their written work. Pupils in all year groups write for a suitable range of purposes. Younger pupils use adjectives including colour words appropriately when writing descriptions of minibests while older pupils write diary entries, newspaper reports, poems, instructions and

adventure stories. However, the written pieces that older pupils produce are often short and pupils' abilities to write at length are underdeveloped.

Many pupils develop suitable mathematics skills. Younger pupils develop their number skills effectively and apply these well, for example when measuring areas of the playground using a variety of measuring tools. Older pupils use their mathematics skills effectively across the curriculum for example when using ratio to calculate the increase in quantities needed to make 12, 24 and 30 cupcakes and producing line graphs to show how a sunflower grows during seven weeks.

Most pupils develop suitable digital skills. Younger pupils create graphs to show the number of different minibeasts found in the school's outdoor area. Pupils in the middle of the school send e-mail messages to the headteacher asking for permission to go on a visit to the town centre. Older pupils create databases, for example giving details of London landmarks. However, pupils' progress in developing effective digital skills is limited by the lack of opportunities for them to apply these often enough.

Many pupils develop effective creative skills. Younger pupils study the work of Welsh artists and recreate paintings in the same style, for example using paint and collage materials to produce pictures of Tenby. Older pupils use clay to create miniature statues of Robert Owen and pastels to produce work in the style of Henry Moore. A few older pupils take part in music lessons in which they compose music, write lyrics and perform their work combining singing with the use of a range of musical instruments.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils enjoy school. The school's special focus on well-being has developed many pupils' confidence, resilience and capacity to engage in their learning well. Positive relationships between pupils and staff are a strength of the school.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school. They understand the school rules and the importance of being 'ready, respectful and safe'. Nearly all pupils know who to turn to if they have any concerns. Most are confident that staff will listen to any problems and will take appropriate action to help to resolve these. Most pupils demonstrate an inclusive and tolerant attitude towards others and a few pupils exhibit a commendably high level of empathy and compassion. Many pupils behave well in class and at break and lunchtimes. However, a few pupils' poor behaviour sometimes impacts negatively on other pupils' well-being or engagement in learning.

Many pupils display positive attitudes to their learning and engage well in lessons. Most pupils show pride in their work and collaborate well with others in pairs and groups, for example when older pupils discuss an email to send to Farmer Rob who owns a dairy farm they have recently visited. Most pupils in the younger age groups concentrate well on their activities. They remain focused on tasks that are practical and engaging, such as when using percussion instruments to compose simple rhythms. Many older pupils work independently in a successful manner on tasks that are familiar to them. Many pupils make sensible suggestions when asked to participate in planning the next steps in their learning. However, a few pupils do not sustain their concentration well enough in lessons. Only a few pupils make good use

of teachers' written feedback to improve their work. In the school's specialist centre, many pupils engage well with learning activities and respond suitably to questions from the teacher.

Many pupils know how to stay safe online. Older pupils create posters to help others understand not to communicate with people they do not know and not to share personal information.

Many pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily. However, a minority of pupils bring unhealthy snacks to school regularly. Most pupils enjoy and participate well in the school's 'daily mile' activity to improve their health and well-being.

Pupil representatives from most year groups are involved in school leadership groups as Leaders of Learning or members of the Criw Cymraeg. These pupils have made suggestions about ways to improve the school's learning experiences, for example holding theme days relating to the curriculum. They have also been successful in obtaining additional recycling bins and play equipment for the school grounds.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

Teachers know their pupils well. They create good relationships with them and provide an engaging and inclusive environment where most pupils feel comfortable and many are ready to learn. Teaching assistants provide valuable support for pupils both in class and when delivering a wide range of interventions. They are highly skilled in specific aspects of their work, for example in developing pupils' ability to read. In many literacy and numeracy sessions, teachers build well on pupils' previous learning and this helps to ensure that they make appropriate progress. Many teachers use strategies such as questioning well to check pupils understanding and to extend their thinking. However, when planning for subjects other than literacy and numeracy, many teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do and the activities they plan to develop pupils' independence lack challenge. This happens more often with older pupils and as a result the pace of pupils' learning is too slow. This means that they do not always make as much progress as they could.

Teachers are making good progress in developing their plans to implement the curriculum for Wales. These plans include interesting opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the history and culture of Wales, through a focus on Newtown. Teachers organise trips and visits to local buildings and plan opportunities for pupils to find out about people from the area who have had a significant impact on the town. They are beginning to involve pupils in contributing to learning plans using the 'everyone planning in class' approach.

Teachers plan systematically to teach literacy and numeracy. They focus well on these skills and as a result pupils' reading skills have improved and they develop sound mathematical skills which they use in a range of contexts in other areas of

learning. Plans to develop pupils' digital skills are in place but opportunities for pupils to use these skills are less frequent. Staff develop pupils' Welsh language skills appropriately. Teachers and teaching assistants incorporate Welsh into classroom activities such as registration sessions and plan opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to speak in Welsh, for example through games in which pupils ask and answer questions.

Most teachers provide useful verbal feedback to pupils to help them to know what they have done well and how to improve their work. They often provide written feedback in pupils' books but the quality of this varies across the school and too often is not helpful in supporting pupils to make progress in their learning. The success criteria that teachers develop for pupils' 'missions' do not focus well enough on pupils' learning or provide a progression in skills development.

The school's reports to parents provide details of their child's progress in literacy, numeracy and digital skills. They also highlight aspects that pupils need to improve in literacy and numeracy. Teachers and leaders have thought of different ways of presenting information to families who have English as an additional language, for example providing booklets of photographs of pupils involved in a range of school activities.

Care, support and guidance

The school is an inclusive and welcoming place where staff put the well-being of pupils at the heart of its provision. This focus is a strength of the school and results in positive relationships between pupils and staff.

Teachers know their pupils well and choose from a wide range of beneficial wellbeing interventions that support the needs of individual pupils effectively. These include counselling sessions and programmes for pupils with social and emotional difficulties that help pupils to understand their emotions and to adjust their behaviour.

Well trained teaching assistants deliver valuable learning interventions that support pupils well to improve their reading, spelling and numeracy skills. Pupils with and without additional learning needs are able to access these programmes currently to help them to catch up and address the gaps in learning caused by school closures and the challenges caused by remote lessons during the pandemic.

The school has clear procedures for identifying and tracking the progress of pupils with additional learning needs. All pupils in the school, regardless of need, have useful one page profiles, which help teachers to understand their needs and to plan appropriately to meet these. The additional learning needs co-ordinator monitors closely the detailed individual education plans of pupils who receive extra support.

The school's well-established specialist centre provides for a few pupils whose needs cannot be met successfully in mainstream classes. In addition, leaders have recently established a nurture class to enable a very small number of pupils to receive intensive support. This enhanced provision has already led to pupils returning successfully to mainstream classes.

The school makes good provision for pupils with English as an additional language, including the children of refugees from Syria, Lebanon and Afghanistan. These pupils are an important part of the inclusive ethos of the school and many make good progress in their learning.

The school's ethos and practice promote pupils' moral and social development appropriately. Staff provide opportunities for pupils learn about children's rights including through collective worship and the curriculum. Teachers provide tasks in which groups of pupils discuss and explain which rights they think are the most important. Pupils explore their culture and heritage through visits to local places of interest, including art galleries, churches and a dairy farm. Pupils enjoy these activities which create useful starting points for further discussion, writing and creative work in class. A minority of pupils perform in the school choir or band, for example at the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations and annual Eisteddfod.

Staff provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities in school including through pupil leadership groups, including the Leaders of Learning, Criw Cymraeg and Sports Ambassadors.

The school has effective links with a wide range of community organisations to support pupils' wellbeing and learning. For example, the police liaison officer talks to pupils about important topics such as online safety and substance misuse. Local charities provide activities and respite to assist the significant number of young carers at the school beneficially. Links with Hope Church and the Newtown Together Stakeholder Group have led to donations of equipment, such as cycle helmets, and valuable community action events, which pupils have been able to participate in.

Staff do not currently provide any extra-curricular activities. However, the school provides good opportunities for pupils to take part in music lessons. Leaders encourage pupils to take part in activities in the local community including sports training and youth groups. The school took part in the Summer Holiday Enrichment Programme in 2021 which provided helpful provision for pupils and their families during the summer break.

The school has robust arrangements in place for safeguarding pupils. Teachers ensure that the learning experiences they provide help to develop pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet. A well-being letter was issued to the school noting a concern that was raised during the inspection.

Leaders have sound processes in place to monitor pupil attendance and a good relationship with the attendance welfare officer to support families of pupils whose attendance needs to improve.

Leadership and management

Leaders have developed a clear vision for the school that focuses successfully on nurturing pupils' well-being. The headteacher's compassionate leadership places pupils and staff at the heart of her decisions. Leaders model professional values and behaviours that contribute positively to effective teamwork and result in a strong team ethos.

Leaders and teachers have a strong commitment to addressing national priorities in education. The headteacher is steering the school effectively through a period of educational reform and focusing on the development of a collaborative team approach to manage this change. However, leaders have not defined key roles and responsibilities within this process. Leaders encourage staff to innovate and trial new approaches to teaching and learning in preparation for the Curriculum for Wales. This year staff have been using 'missions' to develop pupils' independence in applying their skills across the curriculum. However, leaders have not monitored these approaches closely enough to make useful evaluations of their strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders have developed a positive culture that promotes and supports development through collaborative working within and beyond the school. For example, teachers work together to plan for skills development across the curriculum and work with colleagues from cluster schools on initiatives to develop independent learning.

Staff performance is managed well and staff feel valued through the supportive approach led by the headteacher. The headteacher plans an appropriate range of professional training for staff to support the school's priorities.

Leaders have developed suitable improvement processes. Generally, leaders identify the school's strengths and areas in need of improvement appropriately, for example pupils' Welsh language skills. Over time leaders have led improvements in important aspects of the school's work. For example, pupils' reading skills have improved and capable readers have a range of strategies to draw on when reading and discussing unfamiliar texts.

Leaders undertake a range of monitoring activities including lesson observations, stakeholder surveys and listening to learners to provide them with first hand evidence to help them to evaluate aspects of the school's work. However, too often monitoring activities do not focus well enough on the standards that pupils achieve and progress they make. As a result, leaders do not identify precisely enough the aspects of teaching and learning that need to improve. This makes it difficult for the school to address improvements swiftly in the areas of its work currently most in need of development, for example ensuring that teachers provide sufficient challenge for pupils when planning for them to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.

The school's governors are knowledgeable and experienced. They visit the school regularly to take part in monitoring activities with members of staff. This provides a beneficial context, which informs their discussions during meetings and supports them to provide robust challenge about the school's work. Together, leaders and governors manage the school's finances prudently. They ensure that the funding from the pupil development grant is used well, for example to support parents of pupils in the younger age groups. The school runs regular six week programmes for parents that focus on helping them to understand and support their children's behaviour. Governors ensure that the school has appropriate policies and procedures to promote robust safeguarding arrangements. However, arrangements to ensure that pupils eat healthily do not always comply with the school's policy on healthy eating and drinking.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carers 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' wellbeing, 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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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