



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

A report on

Garth C.P. School

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by

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

About Garth C.P. School

Name of provider	Garth C.P. School
Local authority	Wrexham County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	57
Pupils of statutory school age	36
Number in nursery classes	11
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 21.3%)	8%
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 22.2%)	25%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	January 2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	April 2011
Start date of inspection	04/07/2022

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 Dee Valley Federation of schools was formed in January 2014 and consists of Froncysyllte Community Primary School, Garth Community Primary School and Pentre Church in Wales Primary School. It is led by the recently appointed headteacher and a team of assistant headteachers at each of the three schools. These senior leaders manage the day to day running of each of their schools and assume responsibility for operational matters at each school in the headteacher's absence.

Garth Primary School is caring and nurturing with an inclusive ethos of mutual respect and trust between pupils and adults. The school provides strong support for pupils' emotional well-being, especially following the pandemic. This includes daily opportunities for pupils to discuss their emotions and express how they are feeling.

Many pupils enter the school with literacy and numeracy skills at the expected level, with a few above the expected level. As pupils move through the school, nearly all make sound progress in improving their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. They apply these skills well in other areas of learning. Standards of pupils' Welsh skills are good, and many pupils demonstrate creativity and flair in their work.

Staff listen carefully and value pupils' opinions. Across the school, teachers plan imaginative and stimulating lessons based appropriately on pupil ideas and suggestions. They develop activities that provide opportunities for pupils to engage in a variety of enriched tasks. However, curriculum provision for pupils to learn about the diverse nature of society in Wales and the world is not fully developed and there is insufficient focus on Welsh heritage and culture.

The school welcomes pupils who are new to school warmly, and older pupils and staff provide beneficial support to younger pupils. This helps the youngest pupils to settle quickly and begin to enjoy socialising with their peers.

The headteacher, senior and middle leaders are beginning to have an impact on improving the opportunities for pupils across the federation. They have recently begun to reflect on the school's provision and consider necessary improvements to be made, for example in mathematics and teachers' assessment of pupils for the next steps in their learning.

Recommendations

- R1 Develop leadership at all levels across the federation, and share the strong practice that exists
- R2 Strengthen self-evaluation processes to focus on the impact of teaching on learning and the progress of pupils over time
- R3 Strengthen teachers' strategic planning for pupil progress across the wider curriculum

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will work with the local authority to review the school's progress.

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils enter the school with literacy and numeracy skills at the expected level, with a few above the expected level. As pupils move through the school, nearly all make sound progress in improving their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. The few pupils who are eligible for free school meals make progress at least in line with their peers.

Across the school, standards of pupils listening and speaking skills are strong. Most pupils are confident, articulate speakers and use a wide range of vocabulary and sentence patterns. Younger pupils express themselves well, for example to give clear instructions to characters to help find treasure on a digital map. Nearly all pupils listen well to each other and adults and are respectful of the opinions of others. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 take part in debates listening to different opinions for and against deforestation maturely.

Younger pupils improve their reading skills quickly by using their knowledge of phonics to help them build words. Many begin to read simple texts with accuracy and understanding. Pupils in reception class show an understanding of what they have read by predicting how a story might end. Most pupils in Years 3 and 4 pay good attention to context cues and punctuation to read for meaning. They know how to use the blurb effectively when choosing a book and many pupils can skim and scan for information. By the end of Years 5 and 6, most pupils read fluently and with expression. They describe why a character is behaving in a particular way and understand why authors use different language techniques to add interest to their stories. Many older pupils are avid book lovers and enjoy reading for pleasure.

As pupils move through the school, most improve their writing skills well. By Year 2, pupils write in correctly constructed sentences and for a variety of different purposes, for example to write imaginative shape poems on sea creatures. Older pupils write at increasing length and for different audiences. Many pupils organise their work well into paragraphs, use a range of appropriate punctuation and spell accurately. They use different language techniques such as alliteration, onomatopoeia and personification to add interest to their work. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 design holiday adverts using persuasive language and rhetorical questions correctly to entice holidaymakers to book a trip to their hotel. More able pupils in particular use highly imaginative language to engage the reader. A minority of pupils do not develop their handwriting skills well enough, and a few do not present their work with sufficient care. Many pupils use their literacy skills very well to support their work in other areas of learning. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 write mature formal letters to the National Aeronautical and Space Administration to apply to be an astronaut, as part of their topic on Space. They read a variety of texts online to support research for topic work.

Most pupils develop strong mathematical skills. Younger pupils add and subtract increasingly large numbers and begin to understand time and how to use money. Many older pupils are confident mathematicians. Many use their knowledge of number well to help them solve problems. For example, Years 5 and 6 pupils use

their understanding of shape to calculate the area and perimeter of irregular shapes correctly. They use decimals to convert units correctly to solve weight problems using grams and kilograms. Most pupils' data handling skills are particularly strong. Across the school, many pupils use numeracy skills well to support their learning. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 draw accurate bar graphs to display the results of their science experiment on the impact of force on different objects.

Standards of many pupils' Welsh skills are good. Pupils in nursery and reception classes enjoy singing Welsh songs and in Years 1 and 2 many pupils ask and respond to simple questions suitably. By Year 6, many pupils have strong Welsh speaking skills. Many take part in conversations confidently and describe their likes and dislikes using a range of appropriate vocabulary using extended sentences.

Many pupils have effective digital skills which they use well to support their learning in other areas of learning. Younger pupils program toys correctly to find treasure on a pirate map. Older pupils use a range of software and apps confidently to support their progress in skills. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 create informative videos to present information on The Cold War and use digital packages to draw accurate graphs to display results of their science experiments.

Many younger pupils demonstrate flair and creativity in their work. For example, they design pirate maps using watercolours to good effect and make tasty fruit punch for a pirate combining fresh fruit and herbs. Older pupils work creatively, for example when designing pictures in the style of famous artist, such as Wassily Kandinsky.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

A strong feature of the school is the positive, caring working relationship that exists among pupils and between staff and pupils. For example, during lunchtime, older pupils sit with younger pupils to help and support them. Nearly all pupils show a high level of respect for each other, their school, and their community. They feel that adults in the school care about them. As a result, pupils feel safe and valued in school.

Nearly all pupils settle quickly in lessons and most concentrate exceptionally well for extended periods. They show perseverance and resilience when completing tasks. They understand the importance of maintaining positive attitudes to their work and how this helps them to overcome challenges in their learning. Most pupils work independently and with their peers in pairs or groups to solve problems. As a result, nearly all pupils develop as mature and independent learners. They talk enthusiastically about their work and are highly engaged in choosing what they learn. Overall, pupils' learning is engaging, calm and purposeful.

Nearly all pupils behave well in lessons and when moving around the school. For example, many pupils hold doors open for visitors and when walking around school they are eager to interact and describe their school positively.

Following the pandemic, the majority of pupils engage well with opportunities to take on leadership roles. They are proud of the work they do. For example, the Eco Committee has taken part in a community litter pick. However, the work of pupil groups is at an early stage of development and has limited impact on the school.

Nearly all pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe online. For example, they know the importance of protecting their personal information and reporting concerns to an adult. The pupils' E-Cadet group lead assemblies on aspects of e-safety.

Most pupils have a strong understanding of the need to keep fit and eat healthily. They explain why it is beneficial to eat a balanced diet and why it is not sensible to drink sugary drinks. Most pupils like taking part in physical education and enjoy attending extra-curricular sporting activities.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years of 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

There is a clear vision for the curriculum at the school that places high value on pupil voice. This provides them with exciting and authentic learning experiences. Teachers develop pupils' ideas beneficially and give them opportunities to engage in a variety of enriched tasks. As a result, nearly all pupils participate enthusiastically in activities and develop their skills systematically. For example, older pupils are enthused when they learn about Disney World Florida and develop their numeracy skills well such as when they calculate the cost of a holiday for four people to Florida.

Curriculum planning takes suitable consideration of the Curriculum for Wales. Teachers carefully reflect on learning to adjust future planning appropriately and ensure that there is consistency and progression. The school has a wide range of provision to support the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and to support pupil progress following the pandemic. For example, there are regular opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills, such as through regular guided reading sessions. However, provision for pupils to learn about the diverse nature of society in Wales and the world is not yet sufficiently developed.

Across the school, teachers plan appropriate opportunities to improve pupils' independent learning. They provide resources that are carefully selected and organised so that pupils can choose the materials they wish to use such as when they write independently. Teachers ensure that provision for independent outdoor play for pupils is carefully planned and is appropriate to pupils' stage of development. For example, the youngest pupils enjoy exploring pouring water and mixing natural ingredients when they make their own citrus soup. Teachers and support staff monitor the effectiveness of the provision well and make suitable adjustments to improve opportunities for pupils to learn. Older pupils have a range of opportunities to learn outdoors. This includes involvement in outdoor team sports and learning how to build dens in the forest school. The school deploys support staff effectively and they provide beneficial targeted support for pupils.

Following the easing of restrictions resulting from the pandemic, teachers have begun to re-establish a range of extracurricular activities and visits and visitors to school. For example, staff organised the recent school trip to Chester Zoo. These opportunities are beginning to enrich the school's curriculum well. Teachers provide a

few activities that help pupils to develop their social and emotional skills. Planning to develop pupils' personal and social skills is less well considered and does not build on pupils' skills and understanding over time.

Provision for the development of pupil Welsh skills is highly effective. Daily Helpwr Heddiw sessions provide pupils with good opportunity to practise their listening and speaking skills in Welsh. As a result, by the time they leave the school, many pupils speak in Welsh with increased fluency and confidence. Staff are beginning to provide further opportunities to develop pupils' understanding about Wales, such as a visit to the National Eisteddfod in Llangollen. These opportunities are at an early stage of development.

All teachers and staff have warm, caring relationships with pupils. There is an ethos of mutual respect and inclusivity where every child feels valued. This ensures that no pupil is afraid to ask for help or advice. Praise and encouragement suitably motivate pupils to develop their skills appropriately.

Across the school, teachers skilfully build on pupils' prior learning. They use questioning effectively to check pupil understanding and to move learning forward. Teachers provide clear instructions and ensure that pupils know what they need to do to be successful. Lessons generally challenge pupils' learning appropriately. However, on a very few occasions, activities do not suitably challenge more able pupils.

Teachers provide a good range of feedback that is appropriate to the age and ability of the pupils. They use an appropriate range of assessment techniques. For example, teachers provide good opportunities for partner talk. Older pupils have worthwhile opportunities to assess their own work and that of their peers. As a result, they know what to do to improve the quality of their work.

Care, support and guidance

The school is caring and nurturing with an inclusive ethos of mutual respect and trust between pupils and adults. Staff provide strong support for pupils' emotional well-being and pupils of all ages have good opportunities to mix socially throughout the school day. This supports nearly all older pupils to develop care and empathy towards the younger pupils.

Teachers plan appropriate provision for developing pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyle choices. The school makes purposeful use of visiting members of the community such as the local police officer to support pupils in developing their knowledge and understanding of a variety of personal safety issues, for example on the danger of talking to unfamiliar adults.

Provision to support pupils morally and ethically is suitable. Lessons and whole school assemblies provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn about the school core values and the impact that humans can have on the environment. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 develop an understanding of endangered species effectively.

Staff ensure that the additional learning needs of pupils across the school are not a barrier to their participation in the school community or their progress. Staff provide a wide range of support programmes that successfully help individual pupils to achieve success. The co-ordinator for pupils with additional needs robustly tracks the progress of pupils across the school. This ensures that support is tailored to meet pupil needs effectively. The school works with a range of outside agencies to provide enhanced support where appropriate. For example, the school liaises suitably with the pastoral support team to support pupils with emotional needs.

The school warmly welcomes pupils who are new to school, and older pupils and staff provide beneficial support to younger pupils. This helps the youngest pupils to settle quickly and begin to enjoy socialising with their peers. Staff provide effective support to prepare all pupils for change such as when they move to a new class or move on to high school.

The school provides the majority of pupils with suitable opportunities to take on additional responsibilities. For example, Eco Council members enjoy promoting care for the local environment when they discuss ways to reduce plastic in school. As a result, most of these pupils have a sound understanding of the impact that a range of issues can have on the environment.

The majority of pupils develop a sense of their Welsh identity, for example through work towards the national Eisteddfod. Generally, however, there is too narrow a focus in provision on what it means to be Welsh and to live in modern Wales.

Safeguarding procedures at the school give no cause for concern. All staff undertake safeguarding training upon appointment and have regular and useful updates. They are aware of how to report any concerns by sharing information with the designated safeguarding officers and recording accurate accounts using the school's online reporting system. The school site and buildings are safe and secure.

The school monitors pupils' attendance daily to ensure that they that any absent pupils are safe. Leaders works closely with the educational welfare service to improve the attendance of pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern. This has had a positive impact on improving attendance of these pupils.

Leadership and management

The federation is led by the recently appointed headteacher and a team of assistant headteachers at each of the three schools. These senior leaders manage the day to day running of each of their schools and assume responsibility for operational matters at each school in the headteacher's absence. Within a relatively short period of time, the headteacher has established a new vision to take the federation forward. He worked with stakeholders to agree the vision for the federation of LIONS: Learners leading Inspirational Opportunities in a Nurturing, Safe environment through faith. This vision reflects the warm and inclusive nature of each of the federation's schools.

The headteacher has implemented systems and processes to improve the way in which staff share information across the federation. Leaders have strengthened how well they communicate with parents and inform governors of new developments at

the schools. Across the federation, many staff carry out their roles effectively and contribute well to improving outcomes for pupils. However, not all senior leaders model professional values and behaviour well enough and the majority of leaders do not have a strategic impact across the federation. As a result, there are stark differences between many aspects, including the quality of teaching and learning between, and at times within, the three schools.

Senior leaders are beginning to work together to reflect on the strengths of the federation's approach to curriculum design. This has enabled them to identify the strengths across the federation and areas for development to inform future planning. For example, there has been rapid progress by leaders at Garth Primary School, which made improvements to curriculum provision to ensure continuity in planning and, as such, nearly all lessons are engaging and stimulating. However, across the federation, not all senior leaders support the headteacher to bring about the necessary improvements to address the weaknesses in provision or to improve pupil outcomes.

The headteacher has a clear focus on improving provision for teaching and learning and has already begun to tackle underperformance. Recently, he has redistributed curriculum leadership responsibilities to ensure that there is more balance within the curriculum teams and a distribution of expertise across the federation. This enables the schools to continue to develop their curriculum with the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. To achieve this, leaders encourage and support staff to innovate and trial new approaches. However, across the three schools, curriculum planning is at varying stages of curriculum development and leaders have not yet addressed any important misconceptions that staff have at this early stage.

Recently, the headteacher has re-established monitoring and self-evaluation activities across the federation. Soon after taking up his post, the headteacher has taught in every class in the three schools to get to know pupils and understand their experiences of school. In addition, he has met with every member of staff to seek their views on their strengths and those of the federation. He has begun to develop leadership capacity by involving other middle leaders in the monitoring and evaluation processes. For example, the numeracy leaders have recently undertaken the scrutiny of pupils' work to identify ways forward in developing numeracy across the three schools. As a result of this important work, these leaders are beginning to feel more confident in their roles.

Leaders are beginning to identify the schools' strengths and areas for development. This information relates to national priorities, such as the Curriculum for Wales, and many leaders and staff have a sound awareness of national priorities in education. The federation's development plan reflects this and as a result of monitoring activities leaders have identified important aspects of the schools' provision that need improving. In addition, leaders analyse pupil performance data effectively. As a result of this work, many leaders are aware of the areas most in need of development, such as mathematics across the federation and sharing the good practice in writing.

Although leaders ensure that staff have opportunities to undertake useful professional development, they do not always ensure that training aligns well enough with the schools' priorities. Staff are beginning to work together to share their strengths and in the best practice staff have valuable opportunities to watch each

other teach, for example in the teaching of Welsh. However, this work is not consistent across the federation.

The federation's governors are well informed about the schools' work by the headteacher and many senior leaders across the federation. However, they have not resumed visits to the school to enable them to gain first-hand evidence and as a result they rely too heavily on information provided by leaders. Governors are keen to share their expertise in improving the school, for example using their knowledge and strengths in matters relating to health and safety and when diligently managing the financial arrangements of the three schools. They balance short-term and longer-term needs of the schools within the federation and ensure that the funding from the pupil development grant effectively supports pupil well-being and progress to reduce barriers to learning. Governors keep up to date with national developments to support their work and are aware of their statutory responsibilities. Governors ensure that they have appropriate policies and procedures in place to promote the importance of healthy eating and drinking among pupils.

When attending the school sites, governors act as role models and encourage pupils to make healthy choices. They work well with leaders to ensure that the school has suitable safeguarding measures and enable a generally strong culture of safeguarding. For example, governors have purchased an electronic system to provide a more consistent approach to the recording of safeguarding concerns. However, not all senior leaders fully support the culture of safeguarding when ensuring effective implementation of the federation's attendance strategy.

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' 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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