



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

A report on

Ysgol Plas Coch

**Stansty Road
Wrexham
LL11 2BU**

Date of inspection: June 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Plas Coch

Name of provider	Ysgol Plas Coch
Local authority	Wrexham County Borough Council
Language of the provider	Welsh-medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	308
Pupils of statutory school age	237
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	42
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 21.3%)</i>	9%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 22.2%)</i>	10.5%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	35.4%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	January 2013
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	23/09/2014

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different from 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 headteacher and other leaders at Ysgol Plas Coch succeed in realising their vision to provide a caring, supportive, happy and safe environment for pupils. This in turn allows nearly all pupils to develop their self-confidence and self-discipline. They are supported effectively by dedicated teachers and support staff who support pupils to develop a range of skills soundly in a proud Welsh environment. As a result, nearly all pupils make good progress.

Nearly all pupils show a positive attitude towards learning. They are well behaved and enjoy contributing to lessons. Many become increasingly independent learners during their time at the school, develop strong co-operation skills and persevere with tasks. They develop their literacy skills well, although a few pupils do not speak Welsh consistently in classes and informal situations. As teachers experiment and refine their approaches to dealing with the Curriculum for Wales, they provide an increasing range of stimulating and interesting activities based on real-life experiences. For example, pupils develop good numeracy and digital skills by taking part in tasks based on recent off-site visits.

Throughout the whole school, teachers use a range of effective teaching methods to help pupils gain a full understanding of the themes that they are covering. They ask probing questions and give pupils valuable oral and written feedback and provide valuable opportunities for pupils to enrich their own work. They support pupils' individual needs well, for example by providing beneficial additional sessions for pupils who have been identified as having additional learning needs (ALN).

Ysgol Plas Coch is federated with another local primary school, Ysgol Bro Alun. They share the same governing body and the same headteacher, who divides his time between both sites. The governing body discharges its duties diligently, for example by conducting site visits, and governors have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. As a federation, leaders take advantage of a few opportunities to co-operate, for example when senior leaders evaluate lessons and standards in books across both sites. However, leaders do not always consider the findings of their monitoring activities incisively enough when planning for improvement. Beyond senior leader level, the federation arrangement does not have much of an effect on the day-to-day running of the school.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen strategic planning processes and prioritise the most important steps to improve pupils' outcomes
- R2 Encourage pupils to speak Welsh regularly in formal and informal situations

What happens next

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

Main findings

Learning

On entry to the school, only a few pupils have literacy and numeracy skills that correspond to what is expected for their age. The remainder have skills that are lower than the expected level. However, many acquire spoken Welsh skills very soon after they start. Nearly all pupils, including those who have been identified as having additional learning needs, make good progress.

Nearly all pupils develop their listening skills effectively. They listen attentively to their peers and adults during presentations and specific tasks, and respond to them appropriately. Many make good progress in their oral Welsh and English skills, where appropriate, from one year to the next. They are very willing to talk to each other and adults and explain their work fairly clearly. However, a few pupils' oral Welsh skills are not in line with their age and ability from their starting points. Many are too willing to turn to English in lessons and at informal times.

Nearly all pupils' reading skills develop well from an early age. Most pupils in the nursery and reception classes recognise individual letters and simple, familiar words confidently. The school's older pupils read a text of their choosing confidently when researching specific areas and when reading for pleasure. They use their reading skills successfully to research specific information, such as the history of Wrexham Football Club, to create a newspaper report.

Most pupils' writing skills are developing well. Pupils in the nursery and reception classes are beginning to practise their early writing skills by making marks with different media and by beginning to write individual letters and simple words to convey meaning. In Years 1 and 2, most pupils write in Welsh in different styles, where appropriate. For example, they write a description of themselves or other characters, such as a pirate, or a simple newspaper article on the over-use of plastic. Year 3 and 4 pupils write more extensive sentences in both languages to describe a pet of their choice or a subject in the past, present and future. By the time they reach the top of the school, many write maturely in both languages in various contexts. They understand that there are specific conventions with which they must comply, such as the need to use formal and informal language in different types of letters. They apply their skills effectively in other areas of the curriculum, such as writing a prediction or a conclusion for scientific investigations or a record of research into the features of particles in a solid, liquid and gas.

Most pupils develop sound numeracy skills across the school. In the nursery and reception classes, they begin to recognise numbers and use their numeracy skills in different contexts, such as creating a graph showing their peers' favourite fruit. By the end of Year 2, they apply their skills in their work in other areas of learning, for example by creating a Venn diagram to classify animals according to the food they eat. Most pupils in Year 4 use their numeracy skills successfully to investigate scientific questions, such as discovering whether the distance of the light source affects the length of the shadow, by measuring the results appropriately and recording the information in a digital table. They also record how quickly parachutes with different surface areas fall to the ground. At the top of the school, pupils use

numeracy skills very effectively on trips away from the site, for example by calculating the area of different parts of Erddig gardens. They solve real-life problems effectively, for example by calculating the profit made by selling goods when raising money for charity.

Most pupils apply their digital skills skilfully across the curriculum. They log in to their accounts confidently, save files successfully and improve their digital work, for example by editing video slides when presenting interesting facts about tsunamis. Most pupils in Year 1 and 2 add a voiceover and text to digital files confidently, for example when presenting cooking instructions. Most older pupils make mature choices about the most effective equipment and software to use for different purposes. For example, they use green screen equipment and QR codes to present their work in the most effective way.

Nearly all pupils' creative skills develop effectively as they move through the school. The youngest pupils use a range of materials confidently to create artwork that depicts various insects. They learn a wide range of songs and nursery rhymes and present them tunefully to parents during a coffee morning. Year 1 and 2 pupils perform confidently when presenting news items, for example about a shark's escape from an aquarium that is broadcast to the rest of the class. At the top of the school, pupils experiment with using a variety of media to convey a range of artwork that is based, for example, on landscapes in north Wales.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils come to school punctually and happily. They demonstrate very good standards of behaviour in lessons and around the school, and they are polite and treat staff, visitors and each other with respect.

Pupils have a high level of interest in their work and many speak enthusiastically about what they have learned. Most pupils develop to become ambitious and capable learners who are ready to learn. They move to their work quickly and are keen to complete tasks. Many show resilience when persevering with their work and complete it to the best standard that they can. Most choose tasks that challenge them to reach high standards across a range of lessons and areas of learning.

Most pupils develop the attitudes and key behaviours that will help them to learn throughout their lives. They develop their ability to work independently increasingly effectively. For example, Year 5 pupils take advantage of valuable opportunities to work on challenges in pairs and groups to develop cross-curricular skills, such as reading instructions to create an electrical circuit. Most enjoy the work and concentrate effectively on tasks for extended periods. Pupils engage with new experiences and ideas and enjoy the challenge, particularly in numeracy at the top of the school and when presenting weather forecasts in Years 1 and 2.

Nearly all pupils value and respect the contributions of others, for example when listening to their fellow pupils talk and when taking turns in the nursery and reception classes. Many pupils have a good understanding of their emotional wellbeing, which is supported by the '*Ciwb Encil*' periods in each class. This develops their ability to discuss and understand their emotions and develop empathy towards others.

Most pupils develop their understanding of how to make healthy choices in relation to their diet. They speak articulately about the importance of eating fruit during morning snacks time and the importance of eating a balanced diet for their wellbeing and growth. Many pupils develop their physical skills and make healthy choices appropriately when undertaking physical activities during lessons, break time and lunchtime and through the school's various sports teams. The youngest pupils make good use of the school park to develop robust physical skills.

A majority of pupils are developing an awareness of children's rights, such as the right to learn and go to school. Nearly all pupils develop their understanding of the purpose of rules, rewards and sanctions at school. The school council has produced new rules for the school based on YPC (Ysgol Plas Coch), which are *Ymdrech, Parch, Cymraeg* (Effort, Respect, Welsh). Pupils are willing to undertake leadership roles and responsibilities such as the school council, the eco committee and the language ambassadors. As a result, pupils play an appropriate part in the school's life and work; for example, the school council has played a part in the process of appointing staff. Most pupils feel that adults at the school listen to their views and consider them in decisions that affect them, for example when choosing themes and deciding on activities that derive from them.

Following the pandemic, inspectors are not reporting on pupil attendance rates during the 2021-2022 academic year. Instead, the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance will be reported on as part of Inspection Area 4.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has planned purposefully to introduce the Curriculum for Wales. Staff provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to have a direct influence on the termly theme and the content of their activities, which motivates them to play an active part in their learning. The curriculum is broad and contemporary and based on interesting themes and a wide range of authentic learning experiences. This develops pupils' skills effectively in all areas of learning and experience, including literacy, numeracy and digital skills, in addition to their continuous desire to learn.

The school develops its curriculum to reflect the nature of its context in full. This includes planning learning activities that reflect the cultural, linguistic and diverse nature of Wrexham, Wales and the wider world. This raises pupils' awareness of their local area and its place in the world. It also places a focus on developing elements of inquiry-based learning. For example, the youngest pupils devise ways of helping the butterflies that are 'on the doorstep', which is this term's theme. Through the frequent use of visitors, specialists and visits to places of interest, staff ensure that they enrich the curriculum naturally and effectively. For example, visits have been organised recently to Erddig Hall and Gardens, which is local to the school and a basis for the term's cross-curricular work. Following the visit, older pupils develop their listening and speaking skills by creating video clips describing the mansion or giving their peers detailed instructions to follow a maze on the school playground to emulate the one at Erddig. Another group makes electrical circuits that include a bulb based on the servants' bells at Erddig Hall. These activities are challenging, interesting and are a highly effective prompt to encourage pupils to learn independently.

There is a supportive and productive relationship between teachers, support staff and pupils. This encourages respect, courtesy and trust and contributes very strongly to the ethos of inclusion at the school. Most adults model language appropriately and encourage and support pupils to use the Welsh language consistently. However, many pupils have a tendency to turn to English too often in formal and informal situations.

Through varied and interesting tasks, teachers and support staff present new skills, knowledge and information skilfully to pupils. They provide meaningful opportunities for them to learn through hands-on experiences in the learning environment in the indoor and outdoor classrooms. For example, valuable opportunities are provided for pupils to learn about nature in the forest area. The youngest pupils take advantage of a wide variety of play provision in the outdoor area, such as the climbing wall and the bridge. This in turn encourages them to develop good physical skills.

The classes and other various areas are colourful spaces in which all groups of pupils, including the most and least able, can learn productively. Displays are stimulating and are a combination of those that celebrate pupils' work and others that support their learning. This encourages pupils to produce work of a high standard that is suitable to be displayed.

The best teaching practices, which are evident across the school, are effective. Teachers ensure that there is a good pace to lessons. They have high expectations of pupils, particularly in terms of their perseverance during learning sessions. They share the aim clearly and use a wide range of interesting resources to engage pupils' interest. They question them effectively and challenge them to extend their responses and discover their understanding. Many teachers provide pupils with purposeful oral feedback that helps them to know how well they are doing and how they can improve their work. They mark pupils' written work regularly and many make beneficial comments that help them to improve the content of their work, rather than only correcting linguistic errors. Pupils are given frequent and increasing opportunities to review and make amendments to their own work and that of their peers in pairs. This strengthens their understanding of what they need to do to succeed in tasks and encourages them to produce work of a high standard.

Teachers assess the progress and development of individuals and specific groups comprehensively. They identify pupils who are at risk of underachieving or those who are more able at an early stage and adapt provision as necessary. This ensures that nearly all pupils make good progress in their learning.

Care, support and guidance

All staff at Ysgol Plas Coch contribute purposefully towards forging and maintaining a positive relationship with pupils of all ages and abilities. The mutual respect and care are a strong feature, which has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes and their willingness to learn. The effective working relationship that has been established leads to a stimulating environment where nearly all pupils behave well, are considerate of others and engage positively in their learning.

Staff pay a great deal of attention to discussing pupils' concerns, which is an integral part of the school's day-to-day work. For example, they provide regular reflection

periods that enable pupils to discuss their concerns and they have ensured specific spaces, such as the *'Tipi Trafod'* (Talking Teepee), where pupils are able to go to talk quietly with their peers and ensure attention from staff.

The school has successful procedures in place to track and monitor pupils' progress. Through its beneficial tracking systems, staff identify the pupils who would benefit from additional support at an early stage and organise specific support. For example, the school provides interventions that support pupils to make valuable progress with their literacy and numeracy skills and emotional wellbeing. The ALN co-ordinator and the headteacher use meetings with other staff to evaluate the effect of these interventions carefully. By working together effectively, they set useful actions for improvements that enable pupils to continue to make sound progress. The school works successfully with specialist agencies to create individual high-quality programmes that support pupils with more complex learning needs to make good progress.

The school provides a number of valuable opportunities that encourage pupils to take part in sport and leisure activities. For example, they take advantage of dance sessions with an external company, compete regularly in Urdd sports competitions and attend rugby and football festivals in co-operation with 'Active Wrexham'. The school also provides beneficial opportunities to train pupils to cycle safely in partnership with a specialist trainer.

A wide range of activities and opportunities help pupils to develop an understanding of their identity, heritage and culture. In order to develop pupils' appreciation of Welsh culture, the school promotes activities such as celebrating the centenary of Urdd Gobaith Cymru, celebrating Shwmae Su'mae Day and organising workshops with Welsh musicians and a visit to a gig where Welsh bands are performing. The school also provides valuable opportunities to engage with the local community by conducting visits and concerts at St Giles' Church and visits to Erddig gardens that support their learning. A highly effective example is the beneficial link with local shops, where pupils have created Welsh signs to promote the use of the language in the community.

The school provides suitable opportunities that contribute to developing pupils' knowledge of different beliefs and develop their spiritual and moral elements. Through periods of reflection and assemblies that focus on stories from the Bible, pupils benefit from opportunities to consider important messages, such as tolerance and helping others, in addition to linking these with their own experiences. Older pupils are given good opportunities to reflect on issues relating to diversity and equality, for example by discussing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transexual+ (LGBT+) people sensitively. The school councillors have also organised a day to celebrate diversity by encouraging pupils to wear odd socks to school. These experiences support pupils to research issues relating to tolerance, equality and respect towards others.

On the whole, the school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop as active citizens and express their views about issues relating to the way in which they learn. It also allows pupils to influence some whole-school decisions through various pupil councils. For example, the school council has been part of the process of

appointing staff. The school council has also been supported by the school to organise a 'peace day' to raise money for the Ukraine appeal.

There is a variety of valuable opportunities for pupils to use their imagination and engage with the creative arts during lessons. When undertaking a whole-school digital project, pupils are given the freedom to showcase their talents. For example, they create shadow boxes, puppets and various props to create a show that they record and convert into a digital video story.

The school has robust procedures for monitoring and tracking attendance, which have a positive effect on pupils' attendance percentages across the school.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. Staff supervise pupils appropriately during leisure time. Staff have a sound awareness of safeguarding processes and leaders respond appropriately to individual cases, and work with other agencies effectively, where appropriate. The school has suitable procedures to support pupils with emotional needs, for example by providing sessions to discuss their feelings and opportunities for them to settle when they return to their lessons.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides effective leadership based on the school's vision to promote pupils' self-confidence and self-discipline. Alongside his deputy, he creates and maintains an effective team which, in turn, ensures that pupils make good robustly good progress in a safe and caring environment. They promote and embed professional values, which sets a strong example for pupils. They are supported by governors who operate as valuable critical friends and provide the school with suitable support and challenge.

Leaders have effective procedures to evaluate the school's performance. This includes gathering a variety of first-hand evidence on several aspects of its work, including teaching and learning. Leaders provide teachers with valuable feedback following regular lesson observations and book scrutiny exercises. They receive useful individual targets as a result of rigorous performance management processes. Governors play an established part in self-evaluation procedures, such as conducting learning walks or listening to presentations that help them to develop their understanding of the school's priorities for development. For example, governors benefit from input from members of the school council to expand their understanding of how they have developed their digital skills. Leaders give due attention to national priorities, such as preparing for the Curriculum for Wales and safeguarding pupils. Middle leaders have an increasing influence on teaching and learning in their departments. However, on the whole, leaders at all levels do not focus enough on the main findings of self-evaluation activities when planning for improvement. As a result, in a few areas, progress is not as quick as it could be.

Leaders manage resources appropriately. They ensure that the school makes suitable use of the budget, including any additional grants. For example, they employ staff to support pupils to regain their confidence and ability to speak Welsh following the COVID-19 lockdown periods. They also invest in staff training in areas relating to supporting pupils' wellbeing. Leaders provide a range of useful professional learning

opportunities for teachers and support staff that align with the school's priorities for improvement. They work effectively with other schools. For example, they discuss resources and activities within their ICT cluster network and share examples of planning templates across the region. Leaders communicate effectively with parents, for example by using a digital app to share information.

Leaders promote healthy eating and drinking appropriately. For example, they provide opportunities for younger pupils to prepare and taste different vegetables in the classroom and score their favourite coloured pepper and provide cooking sessions for older pupils.

The headteacher spends around half of his time each week at the Ysgol Plas Coch site and the other half at the Ysgol Bro Alun site, and deputies are responsible for the sites in his absence. Leaders take advantage of occasional opportunities for staff and pupils to work together as part of the federation agreement. For example, staff attend training events jointly and older pupils are given opportunities to work together before transferring to secondary school.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body/members of the management committee through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior, middle leaders, and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work 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 lessons, including learning support groups and the specialist resource base (where appropriate), 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 (where appropriate) and in outdoor areas
- visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning (where appropriate)
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs
- 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 (<http://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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