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

A report on

Gwenfro Community Primary School

Queensway
Wrexham
LL13 8UW

Date of inspection: September 2024

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Gwenfro Community Primary School

Name of provider	Gwenfro Community Primary School
Local authority	Wrexham County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	321
Pupils of statutory school age	240
Number in nursery classes	43
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 22.9%)	57.7%
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 11.1%)	8.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	10.8%
Date of headteacher appointment	04/09/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/03/2017
Start date of inspection	30/09/2024

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

Gwenfro Community Primary School is a vibrant learning community where pupils feel safe and thrive. Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those from challenging socio-economic backgrounds, make good overall progress during their time at school. Relationships between staff and pupils are exemplary and underpin the excellent standards of behaviour and the positive attitudes to learning that nearly all pupils demonstrate consistently.

The headteacher establishes a positive school ethos with high expectations. She collaborates with a skilled leadership team to ensure that the school has a culture of continuous improvement and a determination to meet the needs of the community it serves. Staff engage positively with regular professional learning opportunities to improve their teaching skills for the benefit of the pupils.

The school's provision for pupils with ALN is effective in helping these learners to make good progress against their individual learning goals. Further provision, for other pupils who need a little extra help to access learning or to regulate their feelings and emotions, is highly beneficial.

The school provides a broad and interesting range of learning experiences. Teachers develop pupils' speaking, reading and writing skills well as they move through school. In general, most pupils make good progress in mathematics. However, they do not have regular opportunities to use this knowledge in real-life situations in their work across the curriculum. Pupils make good progress in learning Welsh. They use Welsh frequently and with confidence during the school day. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop skills and interests in other areas of learning such as music, sport and science.

Overall, teaching ensures that pupils build their skills, knowledge and understanding progressively as they move through the school. Teachers use questioning skills effectively and many use strategies that engage pupils well and ensure that learning develops at a lively pace. However, particularly when working with younger learners, staff tend to over-direct learning and do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to make decisions about their work or play.

Recommendations

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

R1 Further develop opportunities for younger pupils to make choices and decisions about their learning and play

R2 Further develop opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in authentic contexts in their work across the curriculum

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

The headteacher sets a positive tone and high expectations for the school's work at all times. She understands the needs of the pupils and the community the school serves very well. She works diligently with an effective leadership team and all staff to ensure that the school's provision, teaching and learning experiences support pupils to become happy, safe and confident. During their time at school, most pupils make good overall progress from their individual starting points. This includes pupils from challenging socio-economic backgrounds, pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) and pupils who are new to the English language.

Across the school, relationships between staff and pupils have a profoundly positive impact on pupils' school experience and their attitudes to learning. Standards of behaviour are excellent and there is culture of trust and respect amongst all members of the school community.

Spotlight: Effective distributed leadership

Arrangements to distribute leadership responsibilities are highly effective. Clear roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability match the challenging needs of the school exceptionally well. Leaders know their roles well and work together with the constant aim of providing all pupils with the best chance in life and the best educational experiences possible. Within designated areas of responsibility, leaders use monitoring and improvement processes well to ensure a good balance of focusing on improving teaching and learning and meeting pupils' well-being and nurture needs.

Leaders have been successful in implementing national educational priorities. Tailored provision for pupils with ALN in mainstream classes and the school's resourced provisions is strong and meets their needs very well. It ensures that nearly all pupils with ALN are able to access a full range of learning experiences and make good progress against their individual targets. The school's calm and nurturing environment and ethos combined with a broad range of intervention strategies, such as music therapy, supports other pupils that need a little extra help, to develop their skills, make progress and regulate their emotions.

The school has developed its curriculum to align with the principles and purposes of Curriculum for Wales successfully. Learning experiences are broad, balanced and accessible for all pupils. Staff make good use of texts, drama, creative arts and visitors to school to enhance their teaching. Pupils offer contributions to set the direction of their learning and act as 'Captain Curious' and ask 'big questions' to plan

meaningful learning experiences. Learning experiences enable pupils to understand and celebrate diversity. Effective leadership ensures that delivery of the curriculum generally supports progression in learning as pupils move through the school.

Provision to develop pupils' mathematical skills is effective. It ensures that pupils develop a sound understanding of skills and concepts progressively. Most pupils work confidently and accurately with number. However, opportunities for pupils to apply these skills in authentic situations in their work across the curriculum are limited. Teachers provide a range of effective opportunities to develop skills and experiences in Science and Technology. Pupils develop and use a good variety of digital skills successfully to support and present their learning.

Staff have a strong understanding of the importance of developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. Across the school they are highly effective language role models. In classes for younger pupils, staff use assessment information well to pinpoint the vocabulary they need to use when working with pupils, for example to develop their understanding of prepositions. Older pupils have purposeful opportunities to use their speech, for example when recounting facts about the Second World War. They use an extensive range of vocabulary to present information, thoughts and ideas, clearly. Pupils' progress as speakers during their time in school is a notable strength.

The school encourages positive attitudes to reading and develops pupils' reading skills effectively. Older pupils use these skills well to support their wider learning and to read for pleasure. Recent work to improve pupils' writing skills is effective. It ensures that pupils write for a range of purposes and that many develop their spelling, punctuation and grammatical skills progressively and well over time. This work also exemplifies the school's improvement culture.

Spotlight: A collaborative coaching culture

Senior school leaders worked with all staff to evaluate standards of writing at the school and took responsibility for bringing about the required improvement. They used their skills and professional knowledge to model the expected quality of teaching and learning for other staff. They then worked alongside staff to coach them to implement strategies such as modelled and shared writing. This work has had a direct impact on teaching and supported accelerated progress for pupils in their development as writers. The coaching and collaborative culture has spread throughout the school and teachers regularly engage with research, try strategies out and share their learning with colleagues. This often brings about improvements to professional practice, such as to the quality of teachers' questioning during lessons.

Teachers support pupils to become resilient and increasingly independent as they progress through the school, for example through the use of 'amser meddwl', talking partners and working walls. In many lessons, learning moves forward at a lively pace and the level of challenge meets pupils' needs well. Verbal feedback from teachers along with valuable observations from their peers support pupil progress well.

Teachers and staff in the school's resourced provision adapt their teaching effectively according to the individual needs of pupils in their care. This supports nearly all pupils to engage positively with learning, develop their skills and express their individual personalities.

Staff in classes from Nursery to Year 2 provide high levels of care for pupils and invest time and interest in getting to know pupils as individuals. This helps nearly all pupils to settle into school life successfully. Nearly all pupils are becoming familiar with routines and know how and where to access the things they need to complete directed tasks. There is an effective focus on developing pupils' basic skills. Staff ensure that there are appropriate activities and resources both indoors and outside that pupils enjoy. However, in general, adults tend to over-direct learning and play. This means that pupils have limited opportunities to make choices about what they do and how they do it. In a few instances, the activities provided do not match pupils' developmental needs or support their learning well enough.

Leaders, staff and pupils ensure that Welsh is a living language at the school. Throughout the day all members of the school community use Welsh purposefully as a normal part of school routines. For example, pupils and staff frequently use Welsh to name places, such as 'Llyfrgell Gwenfro' and activities such as 'gwasanaeth'. Most younger pupils exchange greetings and basic information confidently. Many older pupils speak in extended sentences using a good variety of vocabulary and sentence patterns. The Criw Cymraeg promote the use of the Welsh language successfully and monitor the amount of Welsh used by pupils in the different classes.

Pupil voice groups, such as the school council and eco committee, have appropriate influence at school. For example, the eco committee worked with the Woodland Trust to improve the school environment whilst learning about the importance and impact of planting trees. Members of these groups apply for their positions and are elected democratically by their peers. They take their role in representing their fellow pupils seriously.

Regular acts of collective worship provide appropriate support for pupils' spiritual and moral development. They include valuable opportunities for pupils to reflect on their thoughts and feelings.

School governance is effective. Governors undertake their responsibilities diligently and strike a good balance of support and challenge. They support leaders to use finance effectively. This includes the use of the pupil development grant, which funds an extensive range of highly beneficial provision for pupils.

Additional information

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

The school's arrangements for site security 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 the use of the pupil development grant.

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:

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