



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

A report on

Cefn Mawr Primary School

**Plas Kynaston Lane
Cefn Mawr
Wrexham
LL14 3PY**

Date of inspection: February 2024

by

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

About Cefn Mawr Primary School

Name of provider	Cefn Mawr Primary School
Local authority	Wrexham County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	192
Pupils of statutory school age	150
Number in nursery classes	22
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 23.7%)	20.9%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 13.2%)	4.0%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	4.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	08/12/2015
Start date of inspection	19/02/2024

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.

Overview

Cefn Mawr Primary School has an inclusive, nurturing learning environment for pupils. The headteacher and staff work with dedication to create a warm and valued culture for pupils and the wider school community. This culture of inclusivity helps pupils to build confidence and develop their self-esteem. The school has an exceptionally strong focus on well-being and emotional support, with a particular emphasis on daily physical activities and outdoor learning. This supports pupils to behave well and engage enthusiastically in lessons.

Most pupils make strong progress during their time at the school. They make good progress in developing their literacy, numeracy, digital, physical and creative skills. However, many pupils lack confidence when speaking Welsh, as teachers do not ensure that pupils have enough opportunities to use the language.

A notable strength of the school is the outstanding use of the outdoor learning areas. There is daily use of outdoor learning across the school where pupils engage in purposeful activities. As a result, pupils from an early age learn to communicate, co-operate, and collaborate well with each other to solve problems, create 'masterpieces' using loose parts and develop an appreciation of living things in the world around them. Their ability to work independently is commendable.

Leaders and staff know their pupils well. This is reflected in their approaches to teaching individuals. Many teachers use questioning, assessment and feedback effectively to check pupils' understanding and to move learning forward. However, this is not consistent across the school. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is strong. Staff carefully tailor support to meet the needs of individuals. They work well with outside agencies to create bespoke packages of support when needed.

The headteacher works purposefully with her senior leaders, alongside the governing body to drive school improvement. Self-evaluation procedures are robust and support leaders to identify strengths and areas for development. They use this information well to plan appropriate strategic actions to secure future improvements. Leaders adopt an effective collaborate approach to school improvement, embracing the input of pupils, parents, community, governors and the staff.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve opportunities for pupils to use their Welsh oracy skills
- R2 Consistently use suitable feedback strategies to ensure that pupils know how to improve their work

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to facilitating a child centred approach in the early years using loose parts indoors and outdoors to enhance creativity, resilience and collaborative skills, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

On entry to the school, a minority of pupils show lower than expected social, communication and numeracy skills. Most pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, make good progress in their learning during their time in school. Most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) progress well from their individual starting points and achieve good outcomes against their personal targets.

Many pupils make rapid progress in developing and using their oracy skills. Younger pupils are very successful in developing their confidence and enthusiasm as speakers in a variety of situations, for example when talking about their adventures in the forest area. They listen attentively to others and respond eagerly to questions. By Year 6, many speak fluently using a range of suitable vocabulary, for example when they reflect on the ways different castles have been built around Wales.

Pupils in Nursery and Reception develop an early interest in books. They enjoy listening to stories and many willingly retell them to friends and visitors. The younger pupils recognise letter sounds and use this knowledge to read simple words and phrases. By Year 2, many pupils develop effective strategies to read unfamiliar words. By Year 6, many pupils read fluently and independently. They use these skills well to enhance their learning across various topics.

Most pupils write effectively for a range of purposes. In Year 2, many write a range of interesting sentences and begin to develop independent writing skills. For example, they show imagination and creativity when writing about a visit to a country park. By Year 6, most pupils develop a wider range of writing strategies, writing more extended pieces confidently and independently. They choose words carefully to enhance their writing. For example, they describe local features using extended writing skills through good and appropriate use of adjectives and adverbs.

Many pupils' Welsh language skills are limited to a few basic phrases. They show a positive attitude to learning Welsh but do not have a wide enough range of vocabulary to express themselves well. Although many understand what is asked of them, they are often not confident enough to respond verbally.

Many pupils develop their mathematical skills well. Pupils in Nursery and Reception grasp mathematical concepts, such as number and size competently. By Year 2, many have a secure understanding of basic number facts, recognise shape and develop accuracy in telling the time. Older pupils develop sound data handling skills, for example, they plot specific locations on a map of Wales and use scale to calculate the distance from Wrexham to various places. By Year 6, many pupils use a wide range of methods competently in various areas of the curriculum, for example when creating a graph to show how different exercises affect pulse rate.

Most pupils apply their digital skills effectively across the school and talk confidently about how they use them to support their learning. Younger pupils programme a robot to move in specific directions and older pupils create high quality animations linking sound and images. By Year 6, most pupils transfer information from a census to a data base, recording life in Cefn Mawr in Victorian times. Nearly all pupils know how to keep safe online.

From an early age, pupils enjoy using their creative and artistic skills. Many develop good fine motor skills, using scissors, glue and paint brushes confidently, for example, when making models of buildings around the village or when creating paintings reflecting Aboriginal art. Older pupils work creatively with a wide range of materials when emulating the work of a local Welsh artist.

Nearly all pupils develop their expressive arts skills across the school in a creative manner. For example, Year 3 and Year 4 pupils compose music to accompany a Chinese New Year dragon dance and participate enthusiastically and energetically in a wide range of physical activity. This has a positive effect on their confidence, their ability to work together, and their fitness and well-being.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils speak highly about their school as a safe, supportive and happy environment. They develop positive working relationships with staff and they interact well with each other. Nearly all pupils demonstrate good behaviour and they are courteous and friendly to staff and visitors. These positive attitudes, along with the strong working relationships, contribute to pupils' strong sense of well-being.

Nearly all pupils feel that staff respect and listen to them. They feel that their ideas and suggestions are valued and this motivates them to make a difference to school life. They take on leadership roles and participate actively in a range of pupil voice groups. For example, the school E-surfers carry out surveys about how pupils within the school use the internet. They also devise safety guidance to keep learners safe online. Other groups, such as the Eco Council, promote sustainability well by keeping their school environment tidy with litter picks, tree planting and saving energy.

Most pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility and pride in their school and community. They take part in a 'save our park' campaign and look at ways to target local businesses and their community, to raise funds to repair the school park, which they see as a very important part of their learning environment.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and drinking. They understand and appreciate the importance of physical activity. Nearly all pupils

actively participate in regular fitness sessions during lesson time and take part in various games and activities at break and lunchtime.

Younger pupils develop independence quickly and take responsibility for themselves well. For example, in Year 2, when working through their weekly challenges, pupils use QR codes to access their learning. Older pupils talk with confidence about their work and can self and peer assess. For example, Year 6 pupils observe and offer feedback to each other during a dance lesson.

Nearly all pupils enjoy learning and speak animatedly about their work. They are proud of their achievements and share their learning experiences enthusiastically. Nearly all pupils listen well and follow instructions carefully in lessons and when moving around the school. They collaborate maturely, making positive contributions to discussions and show respect for the ideas and opinions of others.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has a clear, shared vision for learning that is based on the principles and culture of Curriculum for Wales. It successfully incorporates the school's core values and reflects various aspects of the local area.

Promoting well-being is central to the school's curriculum planning and there is a sharp focus on nurturing pupils' curiosity, confidence and resilience. As a result, most pupils demonstrate the behaviours and attitudes required to progress well in their learning.

Teachers and support staff know their pupils well and as a result there are strong working relationships throughout the school. Pupils feel they can discuss aspects of their work with staff and ask for support with their learning. Nearly all staff have high expectations and manage pupils' behaviour well. This helps pupils to become resilient in their learning and the progress made by the pupils shows that the teaching strategies are successful.

Teachers work together to plan interesting cross-curricular topics, capturing pupils' interests by contributing their ideas and suggestions in the planning process. This provides pupils with a sense of ownership in their learning. Teachers successfully build on previous learning and ensure that activities provide opportunities for pupils to apply their skills independently.

Teachers carefully consider the history and culture of Wales and the wider world when planning units of work within relevant contexts. For example, they provide opportunities for pupils to investigate and write about what the village of Cefn Mawr was like in Victorian times. Teachers' planning takes full advantage of the local places of interest to engage pupils in their learning, for instance the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, and Chirk Castle.

Outside learning is an outstanding feature of the school. The stimulating environment provides a range of experiences accessible from classrooms and a forest school area. These are used effectively to promote social and communication skills as well as benefitting pupils' well-being through active play opportunities. This enables pupils to learn about caring for living things within the environment, for example, when

building and creating a home for a hedgehog in the forest area. Staff create attractive and engaging learning areas, accessible resources, and displays of pupils' work that celebrate their achievement.

Teachers plan good opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills. A recent focus on improving pupils' reading skills has been particularly effective. For example, older pupils use a range of strategies to read and write about the life of a child chimney sweep in Victorian times. Teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to develop and apply digital skills. For example, to support their digital presentations for careers week. They provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum, such as when interpreting data about contrasting temperatures between North and South Wales. However, opportunities to develop pupils' Welsh language, especially oracy skills across the curriculum, are less well developed. As a result, many pupils do not have sufficient confidence to communicate orally in Welsh.

There are valuable opportunities to compare life in Wales with other countries, such as Italy or Japan. Older pupils learn basic phrases in French enhancing their understanding of the wider world.

The school provides well-planned opportunities for pupils to enhance their learning through off site visits, for example to develop an understanding of the local area's industrial past. The art club successfully develops pupils' creative skills, for instance by providing pupils with the opportunity to combine fantasy and reality in paintings of moody landscapes.

Most teachers use informal assessments well. Many staff provide verbal informative written feedback to pupils about their work. However, in a few classes, feedback does not always explain clearly what the pupils need to do to improve their work.

The support provided to pupils with ALN is a notable feature of the school. This provides the pupils with increased confidence to make consistent progress.

Care, support and guidance

The school knows its pupils, their backgrounds and the local community exceptionally well. All staff successfully place a high priority on the emotional health and well-being of their pupils and this is a notable feature of the school's provision.

Provision for pupils with ALN is strong and there are robust processes in place to identify the additional needs of pupils, to provide them with the support they need and to keep their progress under review. The ALN co-ordinator has a secure understanding of her role and this supports staff well to provide a wide range of interventions to meet pupils' needs. Leaders carefully monitor the impact of interventions in termly progress reviews and adjust provision when appropriate. They also make strong links with outside agencies. As a result, most pupils with ALN make good progress from their original starting points.

The school's provision for well-being is highly effective with embedded systems in place to support all pupils. The school is successfully implementing a programme which focuses on gratitude, self-awareness, resilience and recognising individual

personality traits. All classes take part in daily breathing exercises. Pupils feel that this activity is beneficial to their mood and in helping them focus on their learning. The school plans for a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of their local heritage and culture. The vibrant displays throughout the school are a real celebration of Cefn Mawr Primary School and the local area. All pupils contribute to a mural in the hall that reflects their views on what represents the school from both a local and national perspective. Nearly all pupils participate enthusiastically in activities preparing for the school eisteddfod, for example creating three-dimensional models of Welsh castles.

A regular programme of assemblies, alongside curriculum planning and whole school themed weeks, promotes the development of pupils' moral, spiritual, and social skills well. The learning charter that pupils from Years 1 to 6 create ensures that pupils understand their rights and know that they can make their own choices.

All classes experience the world of work in real life contexts through careers week. Visitors to school share various vocations with pupils, including doctors, vets, paramedics and mechanics. Nearly all older pupils consider the jobs they would like and the skills and attributes required.

The school has suitable systems to monitor and improve pupils' attendance. Leaders support families sensitively when they recognise that help is required.

The school has a variety of pupil voice groups which provide pupils with opportunities to develop their skills as leaders whilst supporting school improvement initiatives. For example, playmakers have been trained in how to facilitate games, ensure they are well organised and fair and encourage pupil participation. The School Council are part of the interview process of electing head boy and head girl and take this responsibility seriously.

The school's arrangements to keep pupils safe meets requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides effective strategic and nurturing leadership. She has established a clear vision, creating an inclusive culture with an emphasis on pupils' well-being and purposeful learning. The headteacher has established a strong team ethos amongst staff. Together, the team works conscientiously to meet pupils' needs and to develop pupils as resilient learners with high aspirations for their futures.

Senior leaders ensure that all staff contribute purposefully to school improvement. For example, all teachers work diligently to design and create the school's new curriculum, making it relevant and appropriate for pupils. Leaders ensure that staff understand and carry out their roles effectively and provide appropriate opportunities for staff to develop leadership skills. For example, two teachers are currently accessing the middle leadership programme.

Governors are highly supportive and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They play an active role in the life of the school and gain first-hand knowledge of the school's work. They accompany leaders on

learning walks, talk with pupils about their work and observe pupil progress meetings between the headteacher and teacher. This enables them to support and challenge leaders more effectively. They support leaders to monitor and use financial resources, including grant funding, ensuring it benefits the learners. Governors fulfil their statutory duties to promote healthy eating and drinking appropriately and work with leaders to maintain a robust safeguarding culture.

Partnership between the school and parents is strong. Parents welcome the regular communication they receive from the school and feel informed about day-to-day events, the progress their children are making and changes to the curriculum. Leaders offer parents regular information sharing sessions regarding reform within education and approaches adopted by the school. The school has established effective workshops with outside agencies to support parents to develop positive parenting strategies with their children.

Self-evaluation is thorough and leaders accurately identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The headteacher includes all staff in these processes. As a result, the school implements change that is beneficial to pupils. For example, recent work to improve pupils' reading skills has been successful. The current improvement priorities are relevant and reflect local and national priorities. The school continues to develop and refine its interpretation of Curriculum for Wales. Approaches such as the use of weeks that focus on Welsh culture, history and legends are developing well.

Leaders use professional learning opportunities and performance management processes well to support school improvement. For example, the implementation of whole-school research linked to reading strategies has supported accelerated progress in pupils' reading skills. There is a strong culture of sharing effective practice both within the school and through collaboration with other schools. For example, staff from cluster schools have visited the early years classrooms to observe the 'loose parts' approach to developing pupils' creativity, independence and collaboration inside and outside of the classroom.

The headteacher and governors manage the school finances, including the pupil development grant well. They fund additional adults to support learners, particularly in the early years, deliver specific intervention programmes matched to the needs of the pupils and purchase resources to create a stimulating learning environment. As a result, most pupils make good progress academically and significantly improve their well-being and develop positive attitudes to learning.

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

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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