



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

A report on

Madras Primary School

**Penley
Wrexham
LL13 0LU**

Date of inspection: March 2024

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Madras Primary School

Name of provider	Madras Primary School
Local authority	Wrexham County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	120
Pupils of statutory school age	96
Number in nursery classes	6
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%)	10.4%
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%)	6.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/11/2015
Start date of inspection	18/03/2024

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

Madras School is characterised by its wonderfully welcoming and friendly nature that permeates throughout all aspects of the school's work. Pupils are proud of their school and approach their learning experiences with enthusiasm and verve. They are polite and respectful and support each other carefully in keeping with the feeling that the school is a large inclusive family where everyone is given the opportunity to shine. The behaviour of most pupils is exemplary. There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school and, as a result, pupils enjoy their learning experiences and feel safe at school.

Many pupils make strong progress in developing their skills over time. The provision for developing pupils' literacy and digital skills is particularly strong and many pupils make rapid progress from a young age. Pupils make good progress in developing their Welsh language skills and are proud of their Welsh culture and heritage.

The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and is underpinned by the school's strong values and ethos. Teachers plan engaging and interesting experiences that make effective use of the locality and the school's stimulating learning areas. Teachers ensure that activities proceed at an appropriate pace and they use a good range of probing questions to reinforce pupils' understanding and encourage deeper thinking. Pupils are encouraged to work together as they challenge and support each other to solve a range of problems. At times, teachers over-direct pupils' learning, which limits opportunities for them to develop their independent learning skills across the curriculum.

The headteacher is a passionate and conscientious leader. She has high expectations of herself and others and aspires for the best learning experiences for all. She is ably supported by a committed team of dedicated and caring staff who strive to ensure that pupils' well-being and progress are paramount. The governors support the school with wisdom and integrity and have a strong understanding of their duties and obligations. Leaders have an appropriate knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school's monitoring and improvement processes do not always focus closely enough on the impact of provision on pupil progress. Governors provide staff with purposeful support and ensure that the school makes good use of its resources.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that evaluation and improvement processes focus more closely on the impact of the school's provision on pupils' learning
- R2 Share the best teaching practices to ensure regular opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills fully

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

On entry to the school, many pupils' social and communication skills are at the expected level for their age apart from their Welsh language skills, which are noticeably lower. During their time at school, most pupils make good progress from their individual starting points including progress in developing their Welsh skills.

Across the school, pupils' listening skills are good. They listen carefully to adults and one another and respond using appropriate language and tone of voice. Nearly all pupils make exceptional progress in developing their oracy skills. This is a noticeable strength of the school. Younger pupils develop an increasingly sophisticated range of vocabulary as they express their ideas and opinions during their learning and play. As they move through the school, pupils develop as confident, articulate speakers. For example, the oldest pupils discuss a letter from Henry VII to Jasper Tudor explaining how successful he was at The Battle of Bosworth and use subject-based terms skilfully and maturely. Pupils' Welsh oracy skills develop consistently. A majority of older pupils use common Welsh language patterns that are within their experience accurately and give suitable attention to mutations.

Nearly all pupils demonstrate an admirable enthusiasm towards reading. Younger pupils make rapid progress in building their knowledge of letter sounds and begin to use this to support their independent writing effectively. Year 2 pupils use established class-based strategies purposefully to decode and read less-familiar words. They readily discuss texts, expressing insightful opinions and interpretations of the characters and plot. By Year 6, pupils read fluently and with good expression. They demonstrate an in-depth understanding of what they read and respond adeptly to questions about the text. They discuss their favourite books and authors articulately and support their choices with valid reasons.

Pupils' writing skills are strong across the school. The school promotes a positive writing culture successfully and encourages pupils to express themselves through writing. They consistently present work that is engaging, well-structured and original. In the Nursery class, most pupils develop their early mark-making skills across a variety of contexts successfully. For example, they use crayons to record the findings of their community traffic survey. As pupils progress through the school, most develop into confident, independent and capable writers. By Year 6, most pupils plan and draft their work effectively and imaginative choices of vocabulary. For example, they write an effective persuasive speech to promote Wrexham as a visitor destination. They make intelligent use of rhetorical questions and emotive language as they address the audience and captivate their attention.

Most pupils' numeracy skills develop well over time. Across the school, pupils communicate their mathematical ideas using appropriate vocabulary. For example, pupils in Reception and Year 1 talk confidently about 'capacity' as they discuss how to fill their container in the fastest time. Nursery pupils develop an early understanding of patterns and sequences. They create alternating patterns of yellow and green footprints as they dip their wellies in coloured paint and walk along a section of rolled out paper in the outdoor learning area. They build on this knowledge successfully and, by Years 3 and 4, most pupils recognise the rules for generating number sequences as they predict the next numbers in a sequence confidently. Most pupils apply their numeracy skills well across the curriculum and across a range of interesting contexts. Year 5 and 6 pupils, for example, apply appropriate multiplication strategies as they crack the code and solve the fictional crime that occurred on the school's bingo night.

Across the school, most pupils develop their digital skills successfully. This is a particular strength of the school. For example, younger pupils develop early coding skills as they guide a programmable toy along a route. Year 5 and 6 pupils use their digital skills well to support their learning such as when they create interesting animations to depict Henry the VIII searching for Jane Seymour in a maze. The oldest pupils have particularly well-developed digital skills and use a breadth of software and applications skilfully across the curriculum. For example, they construct detailed three-dimensional images of castles in Wales using appropriate modelling software.

Most pupils develop their physical skills well across a range of activities. Year 2 and 3 pupils, for example, plan and perform their own interpretations of a Hindu dance. They demonstrate good body control and move effectively at different levels and tempo. Older pupils develop their physical skills successfully and enjoy taking part in a range of physical activities including gymnastics, football and various sports in after-school clubs.

Over time, pupils' creative skills develop well across a range of media and they apply their understanding and skills across the curriculum purposefully. They acquire an increasing love for creativity as they progress through the school. Younger learners show a good awareness of proportion as they paint their own interpretations of the Welsh dragon. By Years 3 and 4, pupils shape and model clay effectively as they create striking models of a dragon's eye.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils enjoy school and relish being part of the caring ethos where pupils feel safe, content and appreciated. Pupils know who to talk to if they have a problem and feel comforted that adults will help them when needed. Pupils have a good awareness of the need to support their social, emotional, and mental health needs. They make effective use of the support available where necessary. For example, pupils are able to access lunchtime drop-in session where they can take part in craft-based activities and chat with the trained Learning Mentor about any worries they may have.

Throughout the school, most pupils exhibit a strong sense of respect for themselves, their peers, staff members and the school environment. Behaviour across the school

is exemplary and pupils actively engage with the behaviour management strategies implemented by the school. They demonstrate a mature willingness to take ownership of their actions and contribute positively to the school community.

Most pupils settle quickly in learning sessions. They listen attentively to teachers' instructions and engage purposefully with the class topics. Pupils enjoy participating in whole-school activities such as collective worship, singing, and celebrating their Welsh heritage.

Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are consistently positive. They approach their experiences and tasks with energy, enthusiasm and curiosity. For example, Nursery pupils respond with curiosity and wonder as they explore the properties of solids and liquids by observing how chocolate melts and solidifies when heated and cooled.

Most pupils respond positively to feedback from teachers and apply the feedback to make purposeful improvements to their work.

Most of the oldest pupils enjoy contributing to their learning by suggesting ideas about what they would like to learn through their experiences and activities. For example, during class discussions at the beginning of the theme 'Wonderful Wales', older pupils express an interest in investigating the seven wonders of Wales and uncovering the total number of castles located throughout the country.

Most pupils are resilient and persevere well when facing new challenges. They discuss and share ideas with their learning partners purposefully to solve problems.

During group reading sessions, Year 2 and 3 pupils support and encourage their peers, fostering an effective ethos of collaboration within the classroom. They confidently use resources to research their work independently, including reference books and online sources.

Through the school values and their learning experiences, most pupils develop a strong understanding of the importance of being responsible citizens and protecting the environment. For example, following a workshop from Welsh Water relating to how water is used, Year 5 and 6 pupils promote ways of cutting down on water wastage around the school.

Nearly all pupils possess a profound sense of pride and connection to their school and community. They engage enthusiastically in community-wide activities. For example, they take part in a charity fun run and develop an empathy and understanding towards others who may be facing challenge and hardship on a daily basis.

Most pupils have a thorough understanding of online safety. For example, they are aware of the potential dangers of working online and the need to keep personal information such as passwords secure. Most pupils understand the significance of maintaining a healthy diet and engaging in regular exercise. For example, older pupils engage in discussions about the risks that elevated cholesterol levels pose to health and the adverse effects of alcohol and smoking on the body.

Many pupils develop their leadership abilities successfully through participation in various committees. They are proud to represent their peers and they shoulder their

responsibilities maturely and efficiently. They reflect on the impact of their work purposefully and feel a strong sense of satisfaction with the improvements that they have brought about. For example, members of the school council operate as monitors to model and promote good manners and have made a positive impact on behaviour across the school.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that aligns purposefully to the vision and principles of the Curriculum for Wales and the school's strong values and ethos. Across the school, teachers plan a range of interesting learning experiences that enable pupils to develop their knowledge and skills across the areas of learning appropriately. The school makes effective use of their '*cynefin*' to plan enriching learning experiences. For example, the older pupils visit the Polish hospital and question members of the Polish community about their experiences of arriving in Penley after World War Two.

A notable strength of the school's provision is how teachers plan enriching experiences that help pupils to develop their digital skills purposefully. For example, as part of a whole-school project, pupils apply their digital skills to create and edit an effective short film about their 'Madras Experience.' Teachers place a strong emphasis on providing valuable opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills in a variety of contexts and most pupils make rapid progress as a result. For example, Year 3, 4 and 5 pupils design interesting waterproof capes and write detailed accounts to describe their properties using scientific terminology skilfully. The school promotes drama and art effectively to inspire pupils to develop their expressive and oracy skills. After a visit to watch a performance of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', the older pupils collaborate to perform a scene from the play with commendable flair.

Staff invite visitors to the school to develop pupils' understanding of the world of work and to share their expertise. For example, pupils collaborate with a financial expert to learn about the importance of careful budgeting. This contributes positively to supporting pupils to make progress in their numeracy skills, develops essential life skills and raises pupils' aspirations for future careers.

The school makes effective use of its stimulating and exciting learning areas to provide pupils with a range of practical experiences that support their well-being and physical and creative skills. For example, pupils in Reception and Year 1 relish the time spent in their woodland area building dens, creating interesting models from natural materials and toasting marshmallows. These experiences promote pupils' love for the outdoor and nurtures in them a sense of adventure.

Across the school, there are strong working relationships between staff and pupils. Staff know pupils well and manage behaviour effectively. Teachers are well supported by a team of dedicated teaching assistants, who provide purposeful support programs that promote pupils' well-being and learning successfully. The school has high aspirations for the teaching of the Welsh language. Staff act as positive role models and help many pupils to build confidence in speaking Welsh.

Teachers employ a wide range of teaching strategies successfully. They have a secure knowledge of the concepts and skills that they are teaching. They use

questioning techniques skilfully to recall pupils' previous learning and confirm their understanding of tasks successfully. Teachers ensure that activities proceed at an effective pace and encourage pupils to work together purposefully to complete tasks and solve problems. In the best examples, teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to make choices about their learning. For example, most Year 2 and 3 pupils experiment with selecting which three-dimensional shapes they wish to choose to construct their interpretation of a castle in Wales. However, at times, teachers over-direct pupils' learning, which limits opportunities for them to fully develop their independent learning skills across the curriculum.

Teachers ensure that pupils understand what they need to do to succeed in their tasks. They provide pupils with effective feedback and intervene sensitively at appropriate times during activities to support pupils as they work. Pupils are provided with regular opportunities to assess their own work and that of their peers. As result, this helps most pupils understand what they have done well and what they need to improve. Most pupils respond well to feedback and make useful improvements to their work.

Staff ensure that there are effective arrangements to monitor and track pupil progress. They evaluate and consider this information carefully to respond to pupils' individual needs and plan the next steps in their learning suitably. Annual reports to parents provided useful information to parents about their child's progress and detail the next steps in their learning appropriately.

Care, support and guidance

The school promotes a caring, supportive ethos successfully. This creates a sense of belonging to a close-knit community in which pupils and staff care for each other considerately. Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils well and they respond promptly and sensitively to their emotional and social needs. This is a strong feature of the school. This includes the purposeful use of the school's emotional well-being programme, which supports individuals well.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is effective. As a result, most pupils with ALN make sound progress over time. The ALN co-ordinator works conscientiously to ensure that there are purposeful arrangements to enable early identification of pupils who would benefit from additional support. Staff use this information to provide suitable programmes to support pupils' emotional and well-being needs as well as the development of their literacy and numeracy skills. Staff, parents and pupils meet to review progress regularly and to plan the next steps in the learning. The school works closely with other agencies, for example the Education Psychology Service, to provide specialist support to pupils with emotional and mental health needs. These arrangements ensure that most pupils that benefit from additional support make good progress in relation to their stage of development.

Across the school, pupils have valuable opportunities to take up leadership roles. These roles nurture pupils' cooperative working skills and their confidence successfully. Through these responsibilities, pupils develop a good understanding of how to use their influence to represent others and to bring about positive change. For example, the 'Criw Cymraeg' celebrate and reward pupils' use of incidental Welsh

during weekly assemblies and promote the importance of the Welsh language and culture within the school.

A notable strength of the school is how staff provide rich opportunities for pupils to learn about a range of faiths and religions. School acts of collective worship make a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual and ethical development. Staff provided unique and enriching experiences that promote pupils' appreciation of the importance of ceremonies and traditions. For example, Nursery pupils plan and attend a wedding ceremony for 'Betty and Harry the scarecrow' in St Mary Magdalene's church. Across the school, classrooms have 'prayer spaces' for pupils to have worthwhile opportunities to meditate and reflect. These experiences support pupils to reflect on their own values and to behave respectfully towards others within the school and in the wider community. In addition, pupils learn about festivals including the Chinese New Year and visit a Hindu community in Leicester to observe the preparations for Diwali. This work contributes successfully to pupils' understanding of diversity within Wales and the world and of the need to embrace and celebrate differences.

Staff promote opportunities that develop pupils' ability to distinguish between right and wrong. For example, a local police officer visits the school to discuss the consequences of anti-social behaviour in the community with the older pupils.

Staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to participate in sporting events and competitions. This has a positive effect on pupils' sense of achievement, resilience and work ethic. Pupils also enjoy opportunities to take part in productions, such as concerts and plays, and performing these in front of an audience. For example the school choir sing in St Mary Magdalene's Church at Christmas time.

Staff promote pupils' awareness of their Welsh heritage and culture effectively. For example, pupils participate in the Welsh tradition of Callenig and perform in eisteddfodau. Older pupils visit Caernarfon castle and an underground slate mine to reinforce their thematic work about 'Wonderful Wales'. As a result, pupils engage in the culture and traditions of Wales and feel a sense of belonging and pride. This is reinforced by annual residential visits, for example to an outdoor centre, which also have a positive impact on pupils' physical and social skills.

The school has effective strategies in place for promoting regular pupil attendance and punctuality. Staff work closely and sensitively with families and other agencies where attendance is a cause for concern. There is a robust culture of safeguarding at the school and staff understand their roles and responsibilities in contributing to pupils' safety.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is a caring and committed leader. She has a clear vision for the school based on supporting pupils' holistic development within a happy, vibrant learning community. She has shared this vision effectively with pupils, staff, parents and governors and, as a result, there is a strong sense of the school being one large, supportive family where everyone's voice counts and everyone has the opportunity to flourish. The headteacher promotes a strong culture of safeguarding at the school and, as a result, pupils feel safe and happy whilst at work and play.

The headteacher is supported by a capable deputy and a team of conscientious staff who work diligently to ensure that they provide engaging learning opportunities for pupils. Staff know their roles and responsibilities well and co-operate purposefully to ensure that pupils' emotional and educational needs are appropriately met. Leaders ensure that there are suitable arrangements for managing the performance of staff and that their targets are appropriately linked to the school's improvement priorities as well as individual staff members' developmental needs. The school arranges a useful range of professional learning opportunities for staff, which purposefully builds the school's capacity to promote pupils' learning and well-being. For example, staff work closely with local schools to develop valuable resources to support planning for developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills over time. This develops staff's collective understanding of what progression looks like across the areas of the curriculum.

Leaders ensure that there are suitable processes to monitor provision and support improvement planning. They gather a good range of direct evidence to evaluate the provision and, as a result, they have an appropriate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, not all monitoring activities focus sufficiently on the effect of the provision on pupil progress. For example, monitoring has not identified that staff, at times, over-direct pupils' learning and this limits the development of their independent learning skills. The school's improvement plans focus well on local and national priorities including developing pupils' Welsh language skills and implementing the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales. Leaders, including governors and staff, monitor progress against the improvement priorities regularly.

The governors are passionate and committed advocates of the school. The governing body conducts its statutory responsibilities effectively and ensures that there is a strong culture of safeguarding and suitable arrangements for promoting pupils' healthy eating and drinking. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They use this information purposefully to challenge the school in relation to pupils' well-being, progress and standards. Leaders, including governors, manage finances carefully and expenditure links closely to the school's improvement priorities. Leaders have detailed plans in place to use the pupil development grant wisely to provide appropriate programmes to support pupils' emotional needs and the development of their literacy and numeracy skills.

The school builds successful partnerships with parents and the wider community. For example, the Friends of Madras parents' group arrange bingo nights that raise vital funds and invite members of the local community to the school to experience and contribute towards the school's friendly and inclusive ethos. The school provides timely updates to parents regarding pupils' progress. For example, the interim reports share valuable advice that supports parents' ability to help their children at home.

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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