



*Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**Sychdyn C.P. School  
Vownog Road  
Sychdyn  
Mold  
CH7 6ED**

**Date of inspection: November 2012**

**by**

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



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

**Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

**Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?**

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
<b>Good</b>	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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**Publication date: 01/02/2013**

## Context

Sychdyn Community Primary School serves the residential area of Sychdyn, which is situated between Mold and Flint. Pupils come from backgrounds that are neither prosperous nor socially disadvantaged.

Currently, 144 pupils attend the school, including 23 who attend the nursery on a part-time basis. Pupil numbers have fallen since the last inspection. The school is organised into five classes. No pupil speaks Welsh as a first language or receives support for English as an additional language. A very few pupils come from an ethnic-minority community.

Seven per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is significantly lower than the local authority and all-Wales averages. The school has identified 18% of pupils as having additional learning needs, which is close to the local authority average. A very few pupils have a statement of special educational need.

The headteacher has been in post since September 2012.

The individual school budget per pupil for Sychdyn Community Primary School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £3,158 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Flintshire is £3,748 and the minimum is £2,758. Sychdyn Community Primary School is 40th out of the 73 primary schools in Flintshire in terms of its school budget per pupil.

## Summary

<b>The school's current performance</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
<b>The school's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Good</b>

### Current performance

The overall judgement of the school's current performance is adequate. The school's strengths are that:

- most pupils achieve good standards by the end of key stage 2;
- the school provides a caring environment where each child is valued and supported;
- pupils enjoy school, are eager to learn and are actively involved in the life of the school; and
- the standard of behaviour is nearly always good.

However:

- although pupils generally make good progress, many do not achieve as well as they could;
- the quality of teaching is too variable across the school; and
- provision in the Foundation Phase is not fully effective.

### Prospects for improvement

Although it is too early for many of the recent improvements to have affected overall standards or the quality of provision, the prospects for improvement are good because:

- the recently-appointed headteacher provides outstanding leadership and a clear direction for the school;
- she has the support of a committed staff and effective governing body;
- the self-evaluation report accurately identifies priorities for improvement; and
- planning for improvement has a clear focus on raising standards and the quality of provision.

## Recommendations

- R1 Improve the quality of pupils' writing.
- R2 Raise standards in numeracy and information and communication technology and ensure that pupils use these skills across the curriculum.
- R3 Ensure that teaching and assessment across the school is of a high quality and challenges all pupils to achieve well.
- R4 Develop provision in the Foundation Phase so that it meets the needs and interests of all pupils and encourages independent learning.
- R5 Comply with the statutory requirements for Collective Worship.
- R6 Address the health and safety issues identified during the inspection.

### **What happens next?**

The school will draw up an action plan, which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress.

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

#### Standards: Adequate

Pupils represent the full range of ability, with attainment on entry above the local average. Most pupils achieve good standards by the end of key stage 2. However, in a significant minority of classes pupils' rate of progress is only adequate. Pupils develop their communication skills well as they move through the school. By the end of key stage 2, pupils listen attentively during lessons and are confident speakers.

Many pupils in the Foundation Phase make good progress in developing their reading skills, although the most able do not achieve as well as they could. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils are self-motivated and confident readers.

In the Foundation Phase, older pupils write confidently and frequently at length. Many pupils achieve good standards in writing by the end of Year 6. However, pupils do not consistently develop their writing skills as they move through the school. Many pupils make insufficient progress in developing accurate spelling, correct use of punctuation and handwriting of a good quality.

Nearly all key stage 2 pupils make good use of their literacy skills to support their work in subjects across the curriculum. Many pupils in the Foundation Phase do not use their writing skills sufficiently in a range of areas of learning.

Overall, standards in numeracy are adequate. Many pupils make good progress in developing their number skills but their progress in other aspects of numeracy, including solving problems, is limited. Pupils in key stage 2 and the Foundation Phase make little use of their numeracy skills in other subjects or areas of learning. Standards achieved in information and communication technology are adequate in key stage 2.

Pupils entitled to free school meals attain as well as other groups of pupils. During their time in key stage 2, boys and girls achieve equally. In the Foundation Phase, girls generally achieve better than boys. Pupils with additional needs usually achieve well against the targets in their individual plans. Not all of the more able pupils achieve the higher levels at the end of the Foundation Phase or key stage 2.

Pupils' ability to speak Welsh is generally good. Pupils in key stage 2 read Welsh with good pronunciation and understanding. Older pupils write short pieces of text accurately.

Results at the end of the Foundation Phase in 2012 do not compare well to those of schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. At the expected level (outcome 5), results were in the lower 50% or the lowest 25% in all areas of learning. The proportions of pupils who achieved outcomes 5 and 6 were all below the family average. The boys did not achieve as well as the girls at outcome 6.

At the end of key stage 2 in 2012, all pupils achieved at least the expected level (level 4) in English and science. Results at level 4 in these subjects have improved over the past four years. In mathematics, results have not improved significantly and the percentage achieving level 4 or above has fallen since 2010. For the past two years, results in mathematics have been below the average of the family of schools.

The percentage of pupils achieving the higher level 5 in English, mathematics and science has risen over the past four years. However, results in all subjects are consistently below the family average. Results in English were in the lower 50% when compared with those of schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. In 2012, boys outperformed the girls in all subjects at level 5.

**Wellbeing: Good**

Most pupils feel safe and happy in school. Nearly all pupils participate in lessons enthusiastically and have a positive attitude to learning. They are keen to contribute and many concentrate well. Pupils behave well at break times and around school. They interact respectfully with adults and other pupils. Occasionally, pupils become restless when the pace of a lesson is slow. In discussion, they show a good understanding of right and wrong.

Pupils are aware of the principles of healthy eating. They have a positive attitude towards exercise, with many enthusiastic football and netball players.

Attendance and punctuality are consistently good. Pupils are involved in the life of the school and take great pride in undertaking their responsibilities. The school council is proactive and has recently been fully involved in formulating and implementing the new policies on anti-bullying and good behaviour. The majority of pupils believe they have a say in what happens in the school, but not all pupils contribute significantly to what and how they learn. Year 6 pupils become very independent learners but pupils do not develop their independent learning skills consistently as they move through the school. Pupils' awareness of the local community is developing well. Older pupils have a good understanding of life and work outside school.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Adequate</b>
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**Learning experiences: Adequate**

Pupils are provided with a variety of interesting learning experiences as they move through the school. Most learning experiences in key stage 2 build on prior learning. However, they do not always meet the needs of pupils fully because they are not matched closely to pupils' ability.

Provision in the Foundation Phase is not wholly effective. Pupils are provided with a good range of interesting activities led by adults, but there are too few opportunities for pupils to take part in purposeful independent activities. Teachers do not plan carefully to meet the needs and interests of the boys.

Key stage 2 pupils are given good opportunities to use their literacy skills across the curriculum. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy

and information and communication technology skills. In the Foundation Phase, literacy and numeracy skills are not reinforced sufficiently in a range of areas of learning.

Teachers use visitors to school and visits out of school to enhance the curriculum. Many pupils participate enthusiastically in a variety of sporting, creative and other extra-curricular activities that enrich their learning.

Provision for developing pupils' knowledge of the Welsh language is good. However, the curriculum does not contribute well enough to developing pupils' knowledge of Welsh culture and heritage.

The school provides pupils with a good range of opportunities to learn about sustainability, but is less effective in promoting global citizenship.

### **Teaching: Adequate**

The quality of teaching across the school varies from good to unsatisfactory.

In lessons where teaching is good, teachers have high expectations of all pupils; planned tasks provide a good level of challenge and lessons proceed at a good pace. In key stage 2, shortcomings in teaching include lessons where the planned activities are not securely based on pupils' needs and insufficient challenge to enable pupils to attain as well as they could. In a very few lessons, the pace is too slow, leading to low-level disruption.

In the Foundation Phase, shortcomings in teaching include too many adult-led activities with insufficient opportunities for pupils to work independently. The introduction to lessons, when pupils are sitting and listening, is sometimes too long.

All teachers have good working relationships with pupils. Learning support assistants are clear about their role and provide good support for pupils.

Staff regularly assess the progress of individual pupils and the results are analysed carefully. They use the information effectively, particularly to identify those pupils who need support. However, in most classes, assessment is not used consistently to inform the planning of lessons.

Most teachers mark pupils' work regularly. Marking gives pupils positive feedback but insufficient guidance on what they need to do in order to improve. The use of target setting to help pupils improve is very effective in Year 6 but less effective in other year groups.

Reports to parents are comprehensive and meet statutory requirements.

### **Care, support and guidance: Adequate**

The school provides a caring environment where there is appropriate support and guidance for all pupils. There are good arrangements in place to support pupils' wellbeing. Pupils learn how to keep safe and there are effective strategies to encourage good behaviour.



Learning experiences promote pupils' personal development well, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school encourages pupils to work well with each other and to show respect, care and concern for others. The school uses a variety of agencies for support and advice when needed. The provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good. Recent changes by the headteacher have ensured that there is a clear, collaborative system of writing pupils' individual education plans. Good support is provided for pupils with additional needs in groups withdrawn from class and in the new Learning Café where parents and pupils work together after school. The progress of pupils with additional needs is now monitored carefully through the recently introduced pupil progress meetings.

In the main, the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern. During the inspection, two health and safety issues were identified and brought to the attention of the governing body.

The school does not comply with the statutory requirements for collective worship.

### **Learning environment: Adequate**

The school is very welcoming to pupils, parents and visitors. It has a strong inclusive ethos where all pupils are valued and receive equal access to the school's provision.

The school provides a clean and pleasant learning environment. Classrooms in the Foundation Phase are very spacious, while key stage 2 classrooms are small for the number of pupils. The outdoor areas are extensive with plenty of potential for development. Some areas within the building and grounds are not used as well as they could be.

There are generally enough resources of good quality to meet the needs of most pupils. However, there are few resources to meet the needs of the more able pupils. Equipment for information and communication technology is limited and this has a negative impact on the standards older pupils achieve. Only a small number of networked computers are available and internet connectivity at the school is unreliable.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>	<b>Good</b>
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### **Leadership: Good**

The overall judgement for leadership and management is higher than the grade awarded for Key Question 1. This is because there has not been time for the changes in leadership to fully impact on the overall standards that pupils achieve.

The recently appointed headteacher provides outstanding leadership and a very clear strategic direction for the school. She successfully promotes a common vision and values, with the support of staff, governors and parents. In a short space of time, the headteacher has introduced procedures that focus clearly on securing improvements. Staff work together as a close and committed team. All staff have responsibility for various aspects of the school's life and work. They are challenged to bring about improvements in pupils' learning and wellbeing. Arrangements for

managing the performance of staff have been re-instated. Teachers and teaching assistants now have targets linked to the school's needs. Leaders arrange appropriate training for staff when necessary.

Governors are very active in supporting the school. They know the school well and have a good understanding of how it is performing in comparison to similar schools. They are now closely involved in setting robust targets for improvement and monitoring the school's progress towards them.

The school has made good progress in addressing national priorities, such as improving pupils' oracy skills and reading.

### **Improving quality: Adequate**

Although the recently appointed headteacher has introduced effective self-evaluation procedures, the school does not have a good track record of securing improvement over time. It is too early for many of the newly introduced processes to have impacted positively on pupils' standards and the quality of provision. The headteacher has used pupil attainment data and a good range of first-hand information to compile a concise, well-organised self-evaluation report. It is honest and accurate. Self-evaluation procedures include seeking the views of all stakeholders, including governors and parents. Pupils are actively involved in the process of self-evaluation and in monitoring subsequent improvements. Members of staff routinely carry out evaluations of the subjects they have responsibility for and produce action plans.

The school development plan is of a good quality and focuses on four priorities identified in the self-evaluation report. The plan is concise and includes measurable success criteria. A programme is in place for staff and governors to monitor progress each term. Previous development plans have had a positive impact on raising standards in reading and pupils' oracy skills.

There are effective networks within the school, allowing staff to share expertise and professional knowledge. Staff have worked closely together to ensure the successful implementation of a guided reading programme. The school takes a leading role in a number of working parties with other schools. Projects have included developing the transition arrangements for pupils moving to the high school and work to ensure that assessments at the end of key stage 2 are accurate.

### **Partnership working: Good**

The school has effective links with a range of agencies that make a positive contribution to improving outcomes for pupils. The partnership with parents is good and parents play an important role in supporting the school. They are well informed through the recent introduction of weekly newsletters. Parents are encouraged to help within the school. An active 'Friends of Ysgol Sychdyn' association has raised money to provide, for example, equipment for the outdoor learning area. There are good induction and transition arrangements with local pre-school playgroups and with local secondary schools.

The school liaises well with many external support agencies within the local authority, including health and social services. The school actively seeks support from the local authority and acts on the advice given. Good links with the community have a positive impact on provision in the school. The 'world of work' initiative, when pupils meet people from different occupations, such as doctors, hairdressers and soldiers, is an example of how partnerships with the community benefit the pupils.

**Resource management: Adequate**

The school currently has a large deficit budget due to over spending in recent years. Its finances are now monitored closely. The headteacher and governors are working closely with the local authority to address the situation. The school makes good use of the resources it has available and spending is now closely linked to priorities in the school improvement plan. There are enough qualified teachers and teaching assistants to deliver all aspects of the curriculum. The school ensures that good use is made of staff expertise. However, teaching assistants are not always deployed efficiently.

There have been many positive recent changes. However, there has not yet been sufficient time for the changes to fully impact on pupils' overall standards or the quality of provision. Therefore, the school gives adequate value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Commentary on performance data

At the end of the Foundation Phase in 2012, the percentage of pupils who achieved the expected level (outcome 5) or above in language, literacy and communication skills, and mathematical development, was above the local authority and all-Wales averages. The percentage of pupils who achieved outcome 5 in personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity was slightly below. Results do not compare well with those of schools in the same free school meal band. Results were in the lower 50% for language, literacy and communication, and for mathematical development. For personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity results were in the lowest 25%.

At the higher level (outcome 6), pupils' performance was below the local authority and all-Wales averages. In all areas of learning the percentages of pupils who achieved outcome 6 were below the family averages. Boys did not achieve as well as girls at the higher level.

At the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level (level 4) or above in the core subject indicator remained relatively stable from 2009 to 2011, but rose in 2012. In English and science all pupils achieved level 4 or above in 2012. In mathematics at level 4, results have not improved significantly and remain below the family average.

At the higher than expected level (level 5), results in each of the core subjects have risen over the past four years. In 2012, the percentage of pupils achieving level 5 in English was lower than the percentage who achieved that level in mathematics and science. In all subjects at level 5, results have been below the family average for the past four years. Results are generally well above the local authority and all-Wales averages, although in 2012 at level 5, English results were only slightly above those from across Wales.

When compared with other schools on the basis of free school meals, results in 2012 at level 4 and above for English and science were in the top 25%, while results for mathematics were in the lower 50%. At level 5, results in mathematics and science were in the higher 50% while results in English were in the lower 50%. In 2012, boys outperformed the girls in all subjects at level 5.

Pupils entitled to free school meals attain as well as other groups of pupils.

## Appendix 2

### **Stakeholder satisfaction report**

#### **Response to the learner questionnaires**

Seventy-two pupils answered the questionnaire.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and say that they know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset. They feel that they are helped by adults to learn and make progress, and they think that they are doing well at school. Nearly all pupils know what to do and whom to ask if they find their work hard. They agree that there are lots of chances to take regular exercise and that the school teaches them to keep healthy.

Most pupils think that the school deals well with bullying. They feel that they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work. Most pupils feel that homework helps them to understand and improve their work in school. They agree that nearly all children behave well at playtimes and lunchtime.

Around a half of the pupils do not agree with the statement that other children behave well and that they can get on with their work.

Pupils' responses to the question on how other pupils behave in class are less positive on average than the views of pupils in other schools across Wales.

#### **Response to the parent/carers questionnaires**

Twenty-eight parents or carers completed the questionnaire.

Nearly all parents or carers who responded to the questionnaire expressed overall satisfaction with the school. They think that teaching is good and feel that their children are making good progress. All parents or carers think that their child was helped to settle in well when they started school and they say that their child likes school. They feel that all staff expect the children to work hard and do their best. Most agree that staff treat children fairly and with respect.

Nearly all feel that their child is safe in school. They agree that their child is encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise. Nearly all parents or carers think that the school is well run and many expressed the view that the school provides a good range of activities, including trips and visits.

Most parents think that pupils behave well in school. They feel that their children receive appropriate additional support in relation to any particular needs. All parents or carers agree that the school helps their child to become more mature and responsible. Many parents or carers understand the procedures for dealing with complaints and most would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem.

A minority do not feel that they are kept well informed about their child's progress. They do not think that homework builds well on what their child learns in school. Nearly all parents or carers expressed the view that the children are well prepared for moving on to the next school.

Parents' responses to most questions are similar to the views of parents in other schools across Wales. The percentage of parents who do not feel well informed about their child's progress is higher than average from responses from across Wales. There is also a higher proportion of parents who do not understand the procedures for dealing with complaints.

### **Appendix 3**

#### **The inspection team**

Linda Williams	Reporting Inspector
Christopher Dolby	Team Inspector
Susan Owen	Lay Inspector
Mark Davis	Peer Inspector
Jane Edwards	School Nominee

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

### Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FYear 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11