



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

A report on

**Merllyn C.P. School
Foel Gron
Bagillt
Flintshire
CH6 6BB**

Date of inspection: December 2017

by

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

About Merllyn C.P. School

Merllyn Primary School is in the village of Bagillt near Flint.

There are 172 pupils on roll, including 20 part-time nursery pupils. Pupils are taught in eight single year group classes.

Around 21% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is similar to the Wales average of 19%. The school has identified around 12% of pupils with additional learning needs, which is well below the Wales average of 21%. No pupils have a statement of special education needs. Most pupils are white British. A very few pupils speak Welsh at home and around 12% have English as an additional language.

The headteacher took up her post in September 2011. Estyn last inspected the school in April 2012.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

In Merllyn Primary School, nearly all pupils have a very positive attitude towards their work and a good understanding of what they need to do to improve their skills. They collaborate with each other effectively to support their learning. Most pupils make good progress as they move through the school, particularly with their oracy and social skills. They develop a wide vocabulary that they use with imagination in their creative writing. The quality of teaching is good in many cases and teachers plan well for the development of pupils' number and literacy skills during mathematics and English lessons. Senior leaders are committed to raising standards and improving provision. The school usefully identifies effective practice in other schools across the country that it uses well to develop its own innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that teachers' planning addresses all areas of the mathematics curriculum in sufficient depth and provides opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R2 Fully implement the foundation phase in line with its philosophy
- R3 Strengthen processes for self-evaluation and improvement planning so that they identify key areas and plan comprehensively to address them
- R4 Improve the quality of pupils' presentation and handwriting in key stage 2

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

Most pupils enter the school with skills and knowledge that are appropriate for their age and ability. They make good progress in the development of their literacy, number and social skills during lessons and as they move through the school. Most pupils with additional learning needs make good progress in relation to their individual starting points.

Across the school, most pupils develop strong oracy skills that support them well in all areas of learning. They speak with particular confidence about their progress and how they can overcome any difficulties that arise. They listen carefully to each other and staff. For example, pupils in Year 6 work well with their 'talk partner' to develop imaginative vocabulary to describe living conditions during Victorian times. Most pupils talk with appropriate confidence in Welsh. In the foundation phase they ask and answer simple questions and join in with daily routines with enthusiasm. For example, pupils in the nursery class respond confidently to the teacher as part of registration to indicate whether other pupils are present or not. In key stage 2, most pupils continue to build their Welsh oracy skills suitably. For example, pupils in Year 6 answer questions competently about where they live and what they like.

Nearly all pupils in the foundation phase develop effective reading skills. They use their knowledge of letter sounds well to read words that they are unsure of and understand how punctuation helps them to know when to take a breath when reading aloud. Most pupils in key stage 2 continue to make good progress in the development of their reading skills over time. Most read with fluency and expression. They express enthusiasm for their books and talk with confidence about the content, commenting thoughtfully on the plot and characters. For example, pupils in Year 6 describe in detail the reasons why people may dislike a character in a book who is obsessed with material things. Across the school, most pupils develop suitable reading skills in Welsh, reading simple texts with a level of understanding that is appropriate for their age and ability.

Many pupils write with imagination and flair. As they progress through the school, they develop a sophisticated vocabulary that they use well in their writing. For example, pupils in Year 2 describe the 'scary, spooky wolf' when creating a new version of the tale of the Three Little Pigs. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils use highly creative phrases to add interest to their writing and to engage the reader. For example, when writing a description of spring, a Year 6 pupil writes, 'I could see the landscape glistening in the eye of the sunlight.' Throughout the school, pupils apply their literacy skills across the curriculum at a suitable level. However, the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation in key stage 2 is frequently poor and this distracts from the sometimes excellent content of their writing.

Many pupils develop very strong skills in number. By the end of the foundation phase, most pupils understand place value up to a hundred well and use this knowledge effectively to carry out addition and subtraction calculations. In key stage 2, pupils build further on their very strong understanding of the relationship between numbers. For example, many pupils round numbers up to one million to the nearest

thousand, or ten thousand, with confidence. Across the school they apply this understanding to solve simple problems competently, such as when Year 6 pupils calculate the number of pieces of wood that a carpenter can cut to a certain length from two longer planks. Most pupils in the foundation phase develop their understanding of an appropriate range of mathematical concepts, such as shape, space, data handling and measure, to a suitable level. For example, they read the scale of a thermometer drawn in a text book accurately to the nearest five degrees. In key stage 2, pupils in Year 4 read the scales on force meters accurately as part of a science lesson. However, across the school, pupils do not develop their knowledge of all areas of the mathematics curriculum to a suitable depth or apply their skills sufficiently in other areas of the curriculum.

Many pupils are beginning to develop effective information and communication technology (ICT) skills that support their wider learning well. For example, many pupils in the foundation phase use tablet computers effectively to create posters to share what they have found out about animals in Africa. In key stage 2, most pupils begin to develop their skills to a higher level. For example, pupils in Year 4 create engaging websites to advertise the products of a pizzeria and link these to online mapping tools to show customers its location. In Year 6, most pupils use spreadsheets well to represent graphically the range of diseases suffered during Victorian times.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils feel safe, well cared for and valued. They demonstrate respect and tolerance towards each other. High levels of collaboration between pupils are a strong feature of the school. For example, pupils in Year 4 work well together in small groups to solve problems in a science lesson on forces. Most pupils are polite, demonstrate good manners and are eager to interact with visitors. Pupils with English as an additional language collaborate equally effectively as their peers, often due to good support from teachers and classroom assistants.

Most pupils understand the need to eat and drink healthily and to take regular exercise. They make good use of the fruit tuck shop at break time and many make healthy choices about what they eat at lunchtime. Many pupils improve their fitness by participating in extra-curricular activities, such as dance club.

Pupils have an important voice within the school through undertaking a wide range of responsibilities. They take their roles as ministers within the school parliament very seriously and relish the opportunity to contribute to school improvement. For example, the ministers for technology conducted a survey about online habits and created a noticeboard with advice about how to keep safe online. This contributes well to pupils' understanding of internet safety.

There are warm, caring and respectful working relationships between pupils and staff. Nearly all pupils know where to go if they need help or are worried or anxious. Most pupils enjoy their learning and participate in lessons enthusiastically. From an early age, they show a very positive attitude towards their work and persevere with their tasks well. Most pupils show resilience when facing challenges in their work and succeed in overcoming obstacles very well, particularly in Year 6. They move quietly and calmly around the school, between lessons and to and from the playground. Standards of behaviour are consistently high across the school.

There is a strong emphasis in the school on encouraging fairness, equality and tolerance of others and nearly all pupils respond positively to this. For example, many pupils can discuss important values such as respect as a result of the work they undertake on the rights of the child.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. In many cases, learning proceeds at pace and teachers provide pupils with engaging activities that encourage them to stay focused for extended periods. For example, staff in the nursery class provide pupils with a range of tasks, such as building a sleigh for Santa, that engross pupils in their learning and allow them to develop a wide range of physical, creative and literacy skills. All teachers are reflective practitioners. They consider the effectiveness of their teaching on a regular basis and seek feedback from pupils about how well lessons went and what could be improved. This provides pupils with a useful model to reflect on their own learning and leads to improvements in teachers' practice.

All staff have positive working relationships with pupils and high expectations of how they should behave and what they can achieve. They provide pupils with good quality verbal feedback about their work and the progress that they are making. They work very hard to ensure that pupils have a strong sense of ownership of their learning. This enables pupils to make accurate judgements about the quality of their work, to engage in high level discussions about themselves as learners and to find ways to overcome difficulties when they encounter problems. As a result, most pupils have a very good understanding of what they do well and how they can improve. The quality of questioning by adults to support and challenge pupils is strong. For example, in Year 6, the teacher prompts pupils to provide further details and explain their reasoning when describing living conditions in Victorian times.

Teachers arrange beneficial educational visits for pupils that support their learning well. Visits to develop pupils' learning skills and leadership roles are particularly beneficial. For example, a range of pupils from across the school took part in a research workshop in partnership with Bangor University. They presented their findings to the Children's Commissioner and pupils from schools across Wales.

Residential visits, such as the Year 6 trip to Cardiff, develop pupils' independence and their knowledge of Welsh history and culture effectively.

Teachers plan good opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in a structured and progressive way during their English and mathematics lessons. As a result, many pupils make good progress in the development of their writing and number skills. However, the school does not plan enough opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and knowledge of the full range of the mathematics curriculum in sufficient depth, or provide enough opportunities for pupils to apply these skills in their learning across the curriculum.

In the foundation phase, teachers plan focused tasks that successfully develop pupils' specific skills in literacy and numeracy. Many of these are adult led and guide pupils through their learning step by step. These tasks are successful in developing a limited range of skills, particularly pupils' phonic skills and their understanding of number. However, they fail to provide pupils with beneficial opportunities to develop their wider creative, physical and independent learning skills. Overall, in around half of classes, provision in the foundation phase is not in line with its ethos.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There is a strong caring and nurturing ethos in the school. Staff ensure that all pupils feel valued. The school places a strong emphasis on supporting pupils' wellbeing as well as their academic achievement. As a result, pupils develop particularly positive attitudes to learning.

The school has effective systems for tracking pupils' progress. Teachers use this information appropriately to identify pupils who need additional support and arrange intervention programmes when necessary. These are effective in ensuring that less able pupils make good progress towards their targets. For example, through collaborative working with a local university, targeted pupils make better than expected progress in developing their reading skills. All pupils with additional learning needs have an appropriate learning plan that identifies suitable targets and indicates manageable steps towards achieving these. However, specific provision for the most able pupils is not in place.

The school works hard to involve parents in their children's education. It uses an online communication tool successfully to share information with parents and to receive their comments.

The school helps parents to support their children's learning effectively. For example, when the school introduced a new approach to the teaching of mathematics, it arranged a useful workshop for parents to explain the new methods. The school pays careful attention to the views of parents about how it can help them to support their child's learning. For example, it sought the views of parents as part of a 'learner led conference'. As a result, it made changes to its procedures to reduce the amount of homework in key stage 2.

The school promotes the importance of healthy eating and drinking well. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn about keeping themselves safe and the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. These include a fruit tuck shop and a healthy lunch box policy. Police liaison officers visit the school termly to teach pupils about a range of topics related to staying safe, such as internet safety and substance misuse.

Pupils have worthwhile opportunities to develop their understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. The school promotes respect and tolerance, and celebrates diversity successfully through whole school topics such as Divali. It develops pupils' resilience and perseverance very effectively. This is evident throughout the work of the school. For example, in lessons, teachers refer regularly to the 'learning pit' as a method for pupils to overcome difficulties when they are stuck. The school's personal and social education programme contributes well to developing these aspects. For example, as part of the school's anti-bullying programme, trained pupil monitors take the lead in ensuring that pupils are respectful to each other and adults.

The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their imagination and engage with the creative arts and cultural activities, for example through visiting the Hay on Wye literary festival to listen to established children's authors. All pupils have the opportunity to participate in community activities including local eisteddfodau. These promote their social and life skills successfully.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides strong leadership with a focus on raising standards and improving provision. She communicates this well to all staff providing a clear sense of direction. She ensures that the school has an innovative approach to curriculum development with an emphasis on preparing pupils to learn throughout their lives. Senior leaders set high expectations to create a welcoming learning environment for pupils.

Leaders distribute responsibilities well among all teaching and support staff. This is particularly effective in developing leadership skills in many areas of school life. Staff fulfil their roles conscientiously and work well together as a close and effective team. They collaborate well to drive forward identified priorities.

Leaders have developed their use of ICT systems very well to ensure the efficient day-to-day running of the school. For example, the use of shared online documents allows all staff to collaborate on new policies and procedures. They are proactive in sharing positive features of its provision with other schools locally and further afield. The school is successful in meeting many local and national priorities particularly through initiatives to reduce the impact of poverty on educational attainment.

The governing body is organised effectively and provides good support. Governors use their experience and expertise well for the benefit of the school. They fulfil their statutory duties and challenge the school appropriately. However, governors have not developed their role in monitoring standards and provision well enough.

The process of self-evaluation is well-established. Leaders make good use of the information provided by parents, pupils, governors and staff to identify areas for improvement. They use a suitable range of first-hand evidence, including lesson observations, the analysis of data and the scrutiny of pupils' work, to support self-evaluation. The self-evaluation report is concise and evaluative. However, it does not always identify all the key areas for development, for example the need to improve opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills to support their work across the curriculum.

The school's planning for improvement has raised standards in many areas. For example, the introduction of new initiatives has led to very positive improvements in pupils' attitudes to learning. The current school improvement plan has a suitable number of main priorities that specific teams of staff work together to address. However, the plan lacks clear targets, success criteria and resource allocations. As a result, these teams do not have a clear enough focus for their work. This makes it difficult for the school to evaluate the effectiveness of its actions towards improvement priorities.

Senior leaders use professional development highly effectively, particularly to support the introduction of new initiatives. In developing pupils' independent learning skills, for example, leaders arrange detailed training for all staff including visits to schools with innovative practice. For example, members of teaching staff visited schools in Scotland and Pembrokeshire to view effective methods to develop pupils' attitudes to learning. Having integrated this practice into their own school, leaders arranged useful opportunities for staff from other schools to view this new provision.

Staff have good opportunities to develop their leadership skills. This includes external training for senior leaders and the opportunities for staff to work in teams to support school improvement. The process of performance management for teaching and support staff has a positive impact on raising standards. The well-established links with other schools and colleges provide worthwhile opportunities for professional development.

The school uses its resources efficiently. Leaders make good use of the experience and expertise of teaching and support staff. The school has developed the outdoor area successfully, providing good opportunities for pupils to develop their physical skills. The wide range of good quality resources support the delivery of the curriculum well. Leaders make good use of grant funding to enhance learning opportunities for pupils, such as to support pupils' cultural development and to reduce the impact of poverty. The headteacher and governors work closely together to provide strong financial management and ensure that the school receives good value for money in the purchases it makes.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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