



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

A report on

Ysgol Derwen

**Main Road
Higher Kinnerton
Flintshire
CH4 9AJ**

Date of inspection: October 2023

by

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

About Ysgol Derwen

Name of provider	Ysgol Derwen
Local authority	Flintshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	203
Pupils of statutory school age	163
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 23.0%)	6.9%
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 16.1%)	6.7%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.5%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.5%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2008
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	11/05/2015
Start date of inspection	02/10/2023

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

Ysgol Derwen is a friendly and inclusive school, which promotes a caring ethos successfully. There are purposeful working relationships between pupils and staff that support a positive environment and instil a strong sense of learning and well-being among pupils.

Pupils enjoy learning both indoors and around the school grounds, and they are enthusiastic during lessons and tasks. During their time at school, pupils develop effective social, literacy, numeracy and digital skills. However, the provision for Welsh does not improve pupils' oracy skills well enough. Pupils' outcomes are particularly successful where the teaching is challenging and consistent. They respond enthusiastically when they receive feedback from teachers that challenges them to perform at their best.

The planning of the school's curriculum and the school environment promotes beneficial learning opportunities. For example, staff use the woodland and orchard creatively to engage pupils in outdoor learning. Staff demonstrate positive attitudes towards pupils, and they support and care for them diligently. This contributes to pupils' eagerness to learn and their resilience to persevere with tasks. Staff effectively encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own well-being and behaviour and the emotional support for pupils is a strong feature of the school.

The headteacher leads the school with the pupils' care and well-being at the heart of his vision. He works well with senior leaders, staff and governors to ensure that the school is an inclusive learning community that promotes positive opportunities for pupils. Generally, leaders evaluate the school's work effectively, using regular self-evaluation processes, which lead to purposeful development plans. However, they do not hold staff to account robustly enough for the effectiveness and consistency of their teaching. The school's monitoring activities lead to relevant training opportunities for staff to develop their skills through agreed and purposeful professional learning.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that the rigour of monitoring processes improves the consistency and effectiveness of teaching
- R2 Ensure that provision for Welsh improves pupils' oracy skills

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils enter the school with social, literacy and numeracy skills that are at, or above the expected level for their age. As they move through the school, they make good progress from their starting points. Pupils who are eligible for free school meals make progress at least in line with their peers, and most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make good progress in their learning and achieve well.

Most pupils listen well to adults and each other. The youngest pupils' oracy skills are developing well, and, by Year 2, they speak confidently about their work and experiences. For example, Year 1 pupils communicate purposefully with each other when weighing parcels on balance scales. Most older pupils develop effective oracy skills in English. They talk eloquently and contribute well to class discussions, expressing their views maturely. For example, Year 6 pupils articulate their findings on the characteristics of different planets and explain their opinions intelligently on moon landing theories.

When speaking Welsh, most of the youngest pupils develop suitable vocabulary and respond to commands and greetings appropriately. By Year 2, a minority of pupils use basic phrases confidently, for example to express their feelings or when discussing the weather. By Year 6, the majority of pupils recall relevant sentence structures and vocabulary suitably. As a result, most pupils develop adequate Welsh oracy skills.

Most pupils' reading skills are developing well. Nursery and reception pupils show an interest in books and other reading materials, and they enjoy sharing and handling them as developing readers. Most Year 1 pupils become familiar with the relationship between letters and sounds quickly and they use a good range of phonic strategies to blend sounds and begin to read familiar and unfamiliar words effectively. By Year 2, they use their reading skills well, for example when reading story books and instructions. Most older pupils read confidently in various contexts. They vary their tone of voice and use punctuation correctly to show their understanding. They develop more advanced reading skills purposefully to gather information from different sources. This includes finding relevant information on mythical creatures in Year 4 and older pupils researching the detrimental impact of apartheid on black people's lives.

Most pupils develop effective writing skills. By Year 2, many pupils use punctuation and grammar accurately and use adjectives and similes purposefully when describing different characters and the colour and shapes of leaves. As pupils progress from Year 3 to Year 6, most write confidently in a wider range of genres. For example, Year 3 and Year 4 pupils write poems on the senses and explain how Martin Luther King inspired the lives of others. Most older pupils edit their work accurately and use more sophisticated vocabulary, sentence structures and figurative language to improve their final drafts. As a result, pupils extend their writing effectively and improve their initial drafts purposefully. This reflects their true abilities as independent writers well, when writing across the curriculum.

Most pupils apply their mathematical skills effectively across the curriculum. For example, by Year 1, many pupils partition two-digit numbers accurately. Older pupils develop their numeracy skills successfully and use line graphs well to compare temperatures of Japanese rainforests and Wales. Most of them use a wider range of skills successfully, such as using co-ordinates in four quadrants to rotate different shapes.

Most pupils have good digital skills, which they apply across the curriculum successfully. For example, many younger pupils program robots to travel around a course efficiently. Most older pupils manipulate text effectively, such as adapting and creating fact files and websites on dinosaurs and European languages. They prepare presentations confidently, such as creating and formatting persuasive posters effectively on the facilities and attractions of sport stadia and hotels.

Most pupils develop their thinking, artistic and creative skills well. Younger pupils create art and role-play in a wide variety of contexts. For example, from reception to Year 2, pupils co-operate well to paint and create collages that depict the story of The Three Little Pigs. Across the school, most pupils embrace the opportunities to experiment freely to develop their creativity, such as completing self-portraits in different styles. This includes Year 3 pupils using water colours, pastels and charcoal independently to interpret the designs of Welsh castles and the skulls of different animals.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

The school promotes nurturing and caring relationships between staff and pupils, and this is a very positive feature of the school. This enables nearly all pupils to learn and develop as sensible and well-informed individuals. They show pride in their school and feel safe within its inclusive and warm environment. They feel that adults in the school listen to their views carefully and take them into account when considering decisions that affect their time at school. Additionally, pupils' attendance is good, and is above the national average.

Nearly all pupils are courteous and welcoming to adults and visitors. They behave impeccably in class and around the school. Nearly all pupils show care for each other and respect the contributions of other pupils. For example, during outdoor learning, younger pupils show consideration and kindness to each other when they share items of equipment willingly at the kitchen, shop and water wall. Additionally, older pupils work together effectively to follow instructions when planting herbs and wildflowers in the outdoor area. As they move through school, nearly all pupils show respect for the opinions of others. For example, Year 6 pupils research and debate the importance of renewable energy and the need to preserve the natural world through using hydro, solar and wind power.

Most pupils develop well as capable and aspirational learners. They have positive attitudes to learning, show interest in their work and talk confidently and enthusiastically about school life. Most pupils listen attentively to teachers' instructions and concentrate well on their work during lessons. They collaborate successfully in pairs and in groups, and most make worthwhile contributions to class discussions.

Most pupils draw on strategies to support their emotional well-being effectively. For example, both younger and older pupils explain sensibly how to resolve challenging individual tasks by using different methods purposefully. This helps them when their work gets difficult. For example, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils appreciate the access that they have to the 'Calm Corners' and 'Well-being Tree' for individual and group work, which supports their emotional needs successfully.

Most pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of children's rights. For example, they study relevant articles and discuss how it affects children persecuted by human traffickers and racists. Nearly all pupils show a strong awareness of the importance of their contributions towards creating a caring society and they develop effectively as ethical and well-informed citizens. They are fair and caring in their interactions with others and support the school in arranging fund raising events to support others in society, and for a defibrillator at the school.

Nearly all pupils participate willingly and express purposeful opinions when offering ideas about the school's curriculum. The inclusive pupil voice groups allow pupils to take an active part in school life and their representatives demonstrate a range of leadership skills. This includes Year 6 'buddies' that keep younger pupils safe and interact with them at playtimes. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and representatives are proud of their valuable contributions and achievements. This includes the school council who lead whole-school assemblies on matters that are important to them, such as improving healthy snacks at playtimes.

Nearly all pupils embrace their learning experiences enthusiastically on school trips. For example, they visit nearby museums to study life in ancient Egypt and develop their social skills on a local farm visit to study apples in an orchard and newts in a pond. Nearly all pupils develop their entrepreneurial and creative skills well. For example, older pupils plan a 'business fortnight' to manage ventures of their choice to fund additional classroom equipment.

Most pupils have a good understanding of the importance of eating and drinking healthily. They understand the benefit of physical exercise on their health, such as participating in well-being sessions with a focus on eating healthily, exercise and emotional well-being. As a result, most pupils have a secure knowledge of the importance of good physical and emotional health. Most pupils have a strong understanding of how to use the internet sensibly. For example, they remind each other robustly that they should not share their passwords with others.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that aligns effectively to the vision and principles of Curriculum for Wales and the school's inclusive ethos. The planned activities engage and motivate pupils well and most teachers challenge them to persevere and flourish in their learning. The learning environment is stimulating, and it supports the development of pupils' skills in purposeful ways.

Overall, teachers ensure that pupils access a diverse range of planned experiences to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. Most teachers and support staff collaborate well to provide learning experiences that meet the needs of pupils successfully. This includes planning worthwhile activities to

support pupils' interests. For example, pupils contribute effectively to developing strategies of how to protect a rainforest and its animals, such as sloths and potoos.

The planning to develop pupils' skills is effective. As a result, most pupils make good progress in their listening, speaking and reading skills. For example, younger pupils successfully read letters that describe a postman's work experiences. Older pupils read their own chosen texts accurately, describing the plot, characters and style of the author. For example, pupils empathise sensibly when debating the difficulties faced by children affected by disability.

Most teachers provide an engaging range of writing activities for pupils. For example, they encourage older pupils to produce modern day fables to promote positive messages for younger pupils, which also includes scripts for stimulating films. The provision for pupils to edit and improve their own written work independently across the curriculum is effective and it encourages pupils to write with flair in extended forms.

The planning to develop pupils' numeracy and digital skills leads to purposeful tasks that develop pupils' skills in real-life situations. For example, younger pupils sell items in a role-play farm shop and pay for snacks in the classroom café. Additionally, older pupils organise online questionnaires and run a digital café to develop the technology skills of local villagers. This thoughtful planning of learning experiences has a positive effect on pupils' progress and on their attitudes to learning.

Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about the culture and heritage of Wales. Provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is underdeveloped. Staff model a range of greetings, instructions and questions in Welsh and the school provides satisfactory enrichment programmes to further develop pupils' Welsh oracy skills.

Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and most attempt to communicate clear objectives to promote effective learning amongst pupils. On the whole, teachers explain the purpose of tasks clearly and many lessons engage pupils' interests well. Generally, the pace of lessons challenges pupils effectively to learn to the best of their abilities. However, in a few lessons, the effectiveness of teaching is inconsistent and there are times when pupils lose interest in their work and do not engage with their learning purposefully.

Where teaching is effective, teachers plan inspirational activities that develop pupils' curiosity successfully. They use imaginative teaching methods to develop pupils' skills across the curriculum. For example, teachers encourage younger pupils to utilise the school grounds with confidence, such as using the outdoor classrooms and investigative areas to develop pupils' map reading skills and drama workshops. Teachers also challenge older pupils to work collaboratively, such as improving the school's grounds by painting the benches and organising litter picks around the village.

Staff know pupils well, including pupils identified as needing additional support. Most support staff employ a good range of strategies to guide pupils in their learning. They intervene appropriately and allow pupils to persevere independently, which encourages confidence and diligence.

Most teachers provide verbal feedback during lessons, which encourages pupils to remain on task and focus on improving aspects of their work. The quality of most teachers' written feedback is consistent. Where it is most effective, pupils are clear about what they need to do and how to improve their work, which supports pupils to identify the next steps in their learning successfully. School reports to parents provide detailed information about their child's progress and their attitudes to learning. Teachers share targets for improvement with parents during consultation sessions and through digital platforms.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a warm and caring community, and staff encourage pupils to contribute to its inclusive and friendly ethos successfully. The effective professional relationships between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves are a positive feature of the school. For example, older pupils use coding skills effectively to create electronic tasks for younger pupils. They converse with them confidently during these digital sessions on the skills needed to complete the games.

Teachers and support staff know the pupils well and they respond promptly and sensibly to their emotional and social needs. This includes the beneficial use of nurture groups, which supports individuals and groups of pupils purposefully. The school's collaborative approach contributes well to pupils' happiness and eagerness to engage in school activities. This support helps most pupils to settle well at school.

Provision for pupils identified as having ALN is effective. The ALN co-ordinator works conscientiously with other staff members, external partners and local schools, to ensure that there is good identification, tracking and support for individuals and groups of pupils from an early age. Pupil progress reviews result in staff members having a clear understanding of the needs of pupils. Staff interact beneficially with a range of services to secure additional, timely resources and to offer specialist support to pupils with a range of learning, emotional and social needs. These arrangements ensure that most pupils who benefit from additional support make good progress in relation to their stage of development.

The school develops effective opportunities for pupils to participate in making decisions to improve their experiences in school. Staff encourage all pupils to take on leadership roles effectively on a variety of elected groups. This provision broadens their understanding of the importance of becoming active citizens and the importance of individuals' contributions to support and sustain a purposeful society. For example, members of the school council lead on arranging fundraising days and coffee mornings to support charities and communities affected by war. The eco committee also evaluate the day-to-day practices of the school thoughtfully, such as conserving energy, developing habitats for bees and how to reduce the risk of plastic in the seas.

The school has a beneficial range of opportunities that help pupils to develop a good understanding of their Welsh heritage. For example, the school promotes their 'cynefin' effectively, through each class studying different aspects of the locality and different areas of Wales. This includes village walks to compare Higher Kinnerton with a village in Mexico and the geographical features of Wales, such as castles and Cardiff as its capital city. The school promotes Welsh culture effectively, for example through participating in an Eisteddfod and through its Saint David's Day celebrations.

This provision encourages pupils to engage enthusiastically with the culture of Wales and to feel proud of the school's inclusive ethos within its Welsh community.

Staff place a strong emphasis on providing a varied range of trips and visits that support the curriculum and engage pupils in their learning. For example, younger pupils learn about the world of work effectively. This includes opportunities for them to study the lives of different workers, such as a pilot and the day-to-day practices of a firefighter in the local fire station. Additionally, staff use the school's growing areas, an orchard and a bug hotel to enhance pupils' knowledge on different insects and to study their habitats and life cycles.

Staff enable pupils to make strong contributions to the life of their community. They use the experiences positively so that pupils develop respect and understand that caring for others is important. As a result, pupils learn that acts of kindness make a difference to the lives of families within their locality and further afield. The school uses collective worship successfully to promote pupils' spiritual and moral development. For example, pupils support a local food bank through collecting donations in their harvest festival celebrations. These activities contribute well to pupils' understanding that supporting each other is important in a caring society.

The school's processes for monitoring attendance and punctuality are efficient. Staff communicate well with each other to support pupils. This includes understanding their roles in keeping pupils safe and maintaining the school's strong inclusive ethos. As a result, the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher focuses on placing the school at the heart of its community and he ensures that the learning and well-being of pupils remains at the centre of this vision. The governors and staff support this philosophy and implement it to the best of their abilities. The headteacher encourages staff to model behaviours and values that are based purposefully on the school's caring ethos, which aim to benefit the school community and the lives of its pupils. As a result, leaders ensure that a caring and supportive atmosphere permeates throughout the school, which the pupils embrace positively.

The processes to evaluate the effectiveness of provision and pupils' outcomes are conducted regularly and they are based on a wide range of first-hand evidence. Systems to improve the impact of the school's provision include scrutiny of pupils' books and analysing internal and external information on pupils' progress. Additionally, leaders gather the views of other stakeholders well to inform their practices. For example, they consider the views of parents and act on any findings sensibly. This includes using digital platforms to notify parents and carers of school news and of their child's achievements.

The headteacher works diligently with the school's staff and governors to ensure that the school's strategic and daily practices lead to improvements. Generally, the school's overall monitoring and evaluation processes are effective. The headteacher collaborates well with senior leaders to identify most of the important areas to develop in the school's provision. The link between the self-evaluation activities and

improvement planning leads to beneficial targets that focus on moving the school forward. In addition, leaders share the school's safeguarding culture with all staff thoroughly, which includes regular checks on the safety of the expansive school site.

On the whole, leaders use the findings of monitoring processes positively to target improvements in provision, such as improving the outdoor learning environment. They also evaluate the effectiveness of teaching appropriately and encourage staff to consider the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning. However, they do not hold staff to account robustly enough for the effectiveness and consistency of their teaching. As a result, they do not ensure that a culture of high expectations and a common understanding of professional values is evident enough in all staff's daily practices.

Leaders keep in close contact with the wider school community and with families that require additional support. They build on the strong relationships that exist with parents and support them empathetically. This includes attending meetings with outside agencies that support individual pupils. Governors ensure that pupils eat and drink healthily and advise parents and carers on the importance of nutritious food in their lunch boxes.

The outdoor provision is well-resourced. As a result, leaders and staff develop pupils' use of the school grounds purposefully, which include woodland and nurture areas. For example, pupils use the outdoor classroom and adventure equipment effectively to complete environmental and physical tasks.

Governors are knowledgeable and their regular input creates systematic improvements throughout the school. They develop a first-hand understanding of the school's activities, and they undertake learning walks and discuss pupils' work to measure its quality alongside teachers. They are very supportive of the headteacher and work with him and the staff purposefully, questioning the impact of their work as critical friends. The headteacher and senior leaders advise them realistically and honestly on how to improve provision. This includes the need to develop greater consistency in assessment and feedback practices and to improve pupils' Welsh oracy skills.

Governors monitor the budget carefully and ensure that spending decisions are in line with the school's priorities for improvement, such as investments in digital resources. Leaders use the pupil development grant wisely to provide specific interventions across the school by staff, which provides beneficial support for pupils to improve their learning.

The headteacher and other senior leaders focus on ensuring that staff access effective learning opportunities to support their professional development that match their individual needs. These link well with school improvement priorities and impact well on developing pupils' skills, such as their emotional well-being.

The school shares effective practices with local schools, which provides good opportunities for teachers to compare and share their practices with other professionals. As a result, the professional learning opportunities support the school's capacity for continuous improvement beneficially.

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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