



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

A report on

**Ysgol Acrefair
Tower View
Acrefair
Wrexham
LL14 3SH**

Date of inspection: September 2018

by

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

About Ysgol Acrefair

Acrefair Primary School is in the village of Acrefair on the outskirts of Wrexham.

There are currently 223 pupils on roll between the ages of 3 and 11, including 30 part-time pupils in the nursery. The school has eight single-age classes. The three-year rolling average of pupils eligible for free school meals is 15%, which is slightly below the national average of 18%.

The school identifies around 26% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is well above the national average of 21%. A very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs or are in the care of the local authority.

A very few pupils have English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh at home.

The school was last inspected in March 2011. The current headteacher took up her post in September 2015.

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

The school has a friendly, caring environment where nearly all pupils feel happy and safe and enjoy their learning. During their time at the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make good progress in developing their literacy, numeracy and information technology skills. Standards of behaviour and self-discipline are good in nearly all lessons and around the school.

The school plans the curriculum effectively. Teachers develop pupils' creative skills successfully through a wide range of interesting activities. They use the forest school area very well. They ensure that pupils are developing into confident, independent learners, particularly in the foundation phase.

The headteacher provides effective leadership and a clear strategic direction for the school's work. There is a strong culture of continuous improvement and action planning supports improvement well. Staff share leadership responsibilities successfully. The school engages well with parents and has communicated its vision and values effectively.

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 consistency in teachers' expectations of what pupils can do, particularly those who are more able
- R2 Improve the standards of Welsh oracy in key stage 2
- R3 Provide regular opportunities for pupils to write independently at length and to improve the presentation of their work
- R4 Improve attendance

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

Most pupils start school with skills and knowledge below the expected level for their age. During their time at the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make good progress in their learning.

Most pupils across the school listen attentively and talk enthusiastically about their work using a wide range of vocabulary. By the end of key stage 2, nearly all pupils are articulate and speak with maturity in a range of situations, using extended vocabulary effectively. They explain clearly their preferred styles of learning and express themselves well when sharing opinions, for example about banning smoking in public places.

Younger pupils make good use of their knowledge of letter sounds to work out new and unfamiliar words. By Year 6, most pupils read correctly with an understanding that is consistent with their age and ability. They discuss the main events and characters in their books effectively. Most pupils use higher-order reading skills well when searching for information on topics, for example on photosynthesis.

Across the school, most pupils develop their writing skills well in literacy lessons. Many younger pupils in the foundation phase enjoy making marks outside with chalk and when forming a simple sentence to describe a feature of the local area. Older pupils in the foundation phase write imaginative ideas that engage the reader successfully, for example, when Year 2 pupils write a newspaper report on the first moon landing and Year 1 pupils write an account of the adventures of the gingerbread man. Most pupils' writing skills continue to develop well during key stage 2. Most adapt their style of writing effectively, for example when writing about the experiences of an evacuee. More able pupils in Year 6 use subject-specific vocabulary and include correct facts effectively when writing their science investigation on the flight of a paper aeroplane. Most pupils in Years 5 and 6 are beginning to draft and refine their work well. However, many pupils' ability to write at length independently across other curriculum areas is limited. Standards of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work vary too much across the school.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make solid progress in their mathematical development. They have effective number skills, and a sound grasp of shape and data, and apply these skills confidently in a variety of contexts across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 2 gather information on the favourite sandwich filling of other pupils and use this to create an accurate bar graph depicting their results. Many Year 1 pupils apply their knowledge of addition and subtraction well when handling money to buy or sell goods in the 'supermarket' role play area. Most key stage 2 pupils develop their knowledge of all areas of the mathematics curriculum well. Most pupils in key stage 2 can apply mathematical skills confidently and transfer them effectively to a real-life context. For example, when learning about the heart, Year 6 pupils successfully organised a fundraising event to raise awareness of the importance of blood transfusions.

Most pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are good across the school. In the foundation phase, many pupils add captions to stories confidently and use a simple paint programme successfully to draw a wanted character. Older foundation phase pupils log on to the school's virtual learning environment, access a range of programs and record and upload aspects of their work that they are particularly proud of with little or no support. In key stage 2, many pupils use databases confidently and are able to create moving pictures appropriately. They develop competent research skills and produce multi-media presentations, for example on Snowdonia in Year 6. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe on the internet.

Most pupils across the foundation phase make appropriate progress in developing basic communication skills in Welsh. By Year 2, they can describe a character simply and share their emotions purposefully. In key stage 2, most pupils' writing skills develop appropriately, for example, they write a self-portrait well. However, many pupils in key stage 2 lack confidence in speaking Welsh in less formal situations outside of Welsh lessons and use too limited a range of words and phrases. The majority in key stage 2 do not read simple texts fluently enough or with accurate pronunciation.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Most pupils feel safe at school and know where to go for advice or support when they are worried or upset. Nearly all pupils behave well across the school.

Pupils' awareness of the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices is developing well. Many take-part in the walking activity around the school field or in after-school clubs. They have good knowledge of the problems linked to the misuse of drugs, alcohol and tobacco, and the dangers of anti-social behaviour.

Most pupils across the school have positive attitudes towards learning. They concentrate well in lessons and stay on task. Many persevere for extended periods, for example, when conducting scientific investigations in key stage 2. Overall, pupils complete their work successfully. They are not afraid to make mistakes and they are beginning to develop resilient strategies in order to improve their work independently. Most pupils develop their independent learning skills effectively throughout the foundation phase, for example when they share opinions about the role play area and complete daily challenges successfully. However, most pupils in key stage 2 are only beginning to direct their own learning or to have a regular input into what and how they learn.

The work of members of the different committees and pupil groups gives pupils a prominent voice and enables them to have a positive effect on school life and the wellbeing of other pupils. Most pupils undertake their responsibilities enthusiastically. Members of the school council have worked together confidently and independently to re-organise activities during play times. This has had a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and they now enter their lessons calmly and are ready to learn. The new 'menu' system for homework has improved pupils' attitudes towards their work and pupils enjoy completing these tasks.

Members of the active eco committee raise other pupils' awareness of the importance of sustainable living effectively. They monitor each class weekly to check whether the lights and water taps have been switched off, and to check the contents of the rubbish bin. They focus well on developing a school garden to enable the pupils to grow and sell vegetables.

Most pupils are very polite towards each other, staff and visitors. They are caring and sensitive about the needs of others. Most pupils develop their social and life skills well through a range of activities during the year. They interact well with different age groups across the school. The playground buddies ensure that no child feels lonely and a very few pupils have benefitted well from specific training to help them to ensure positive behaviour by pupils on the playground. The digital crew remind other pupils about safe use of the internet well.

Most pupils are developing a good degree of empathy towards others. For example, they raised a significant amount of money and successfully raised awareness of breast cancer by organising a whole-school charity race. Inspired by the topic about the heart, many of the older pupils planned a pupil fair to support the local blood transfusion unit.

Many pupils and parents have responded positively to the school's focus on improving attendance, and pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly. However, over the last three years, attendance levels have remained lower than those in similar schools. Most pupils are punctual at the start of the school day.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Teachers across the school plan effectively to give pupils a broad and balanced curriculum. They are beginning to incorporate the four purposes of the new curriculum for Wales effectively into their planning. They design interesting themes and learning experiences that engage pupils' interest effectively and develop pupils' skills successfully. A strong feature of the curriculum is the stimulating outdoor projects, such as learning about bio-diversity while creating Tudor homes from natural resources or baking bread on an open fire in the forest area of the school.

The school implements the principles of the foundation phase well. The balance between teacher-directed activities and those for groups, pairs and individuals is appropriate. Teachers ensure well that pupils take part in devising their own activities, such as designing a new outdoor area for Years 1 and 2 and researching about dinosaurs. They also plan activities linked to the class book that are practical and multisensory, for example, looking after Coralline the hen for the day. This builds upon pupils' own, first-hand experiences successfully. Teachers give pupils many purposeful opportunities for pupils to use the outdoor environment for imaginative and creative play and to develop a range of independent skills well.

Many pupils in key stage 2 are beginning to help teachers plan exciting learning experiences regularly, based on what they already know and what they want to learn. For example, Year 3 pupils devise their own zoo park based on a topic on animal habitats and Year 5 pupils create short films to depict life as a mill worker in the Victorian era. The school is planning well for integrating the digital competency

framework into the curriculum. The staff develop pupils' ICT skills well in different areas of learning. They plan a wide range of visits and visitors that link closely to current topics and enhance pupils' experiences effectively, for example by walking across the local aqua-duct and learning about the Romans in a nearby museum.

Teachers plan topic work appropriately and hold an annual Eisteddfod to raise pupils' awareness and interest in the traditions, culture and history of the local area and Wales. A minority of staff use the Welsh language suitably, but, in general, teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills independently outside of Welsh lessons.

Staff across the school have strong working relationships with pupils. They have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour. As a result, classrooms are calm and respectful learning environments. Teachers communicate clear learning objectives to pupils and give them purposeful opportunities to practice and embed their literacy and numeracy skills across a range of topics. For example, in the Year 4 topic on 'One Hen', pupils have applied the knowledge they gained of managing money to a real-life scenario well. They bought eggs to incubate and devised a successful business plan to ensure they had enough money to look after the chicks after they had hatched. The school's provision for developing pupils' enterprise skills is engaging. Many teachers and learning support assistants use questioning well to encourage pupils to extend their learning. Generally, learning proceeds at a good pace.

Teachers assess pupils' work accurately and make effective use of the information from assessments to set purposeful targets for pupils. However, a few teachers do not always have high enough expectation of what the pupils can achieve, particularly in relation to more able pupils. Teachers' written feedback to pupils outlines strengths and areas for development in their work. For example, teachers identify what pupils have done well and make suitable suggestions for improvement. However, not all teachers give pupils enough time to respond to the feedback and to make improvements to their work.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a happy, nurturing community where the high level of care and co-operation between staff and pupils contributes successfully to pupils' positive wellbeing. Staff know the pupils well and respond positively to their social and emotional needs and ensure good behaviour among pupils at all times.

The whole-school tracking of pupil performance and attainment is effective. This system allows staff to analyse clearly the progress of specific groups and individuals. School leaders and teachers use the information from the tracking system well to target support appropriately for identified pupils, particularly those with additional learning needs.

Staff identify pupils' additional learning and personal needs from an early age and ensure that they receive the necessary support to succeed in their work as they move through the school. Teaching assistants work well in classrooms to support pupils' learning. They are very effective in implementing a wide range of purposeful intervention programmes that enable these pupils to make sound progress. Individual education targets for pupils with additional learning needs are specific and measurable, and pupils and parents play an important part in the process.

The school has beneficial programmes to support vulnerable pupils, including those with social and emotional needs. Many pupils attend regular, bespoke sessions with teaching assistants and the additional educational needs teacher. This provision has a positive impact on raising pupils' confidence and helps them to engage effectively in daily school life. Through regular 'sharing the learning' coffee mornings, parents have a thorough understanding of the work of the school and how well their children are doing.

The school's provision for developing pupils' moral and social development is sound. Staff make good use of the whole-school cultural week to broaden pupils' knowledge of the cultures of different countries from around the world. The school promotes respect and tolerance well through planned lessons, pupils' voice groups and charity events. Pupils reflect well on how they should treat others and develop an appropriate understanding of the diversity of the wider world, for example by studying the farming issues that arise in small African villages and through the newly-developed links with a school in Uganda.

There are beneficial arrangements to promote pupils' spiritual development through the curriculum, assemblies, and visitors to the school. The school gives pupils valuable opportunities to undertake leadership roles that have a positive impact on their wellbeing and on the day-to-day life of the school. For example, the school council has made purposeful contributions to improve the school environment.

Staff develop pupils' creative skills successfully through activities linked to the Lead Creative Schools Project and by working alongside local artists and musicians. There are a number of opportunities for pupils to perform at school through the choir, class assemblies, drama club and the annual pantomime written by the key stage 2 pupils. Staff arrange visits to theatres appropriately to engage pupils with live performances. Staff make particularly good use of visits to Glan Llyn and to the Urdd centre in Cardiff, where pupils from Years 4 and 6 learn about team work while taking part in outdoor activities. In addition, the school offers an effective range of extra-curricular activities such as drama, football and choir. These experiences develop pupils' self-confidence and their ability to work with others well.

There are effective arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. This helps pupils to make sensible lifestyle choices, for example about the need to eat healthily and to drink water to stay hydrated. The school gives pupils a suitable range of opportunities to consider their health and wellbeing through regular physical activities. A good range of equipment in the playgrounds, such as trim trails, climbing frames and the multi-use games area, encourages pupils to enjoy active play.

The headteacher has introduced a range of strategies to promote good attendance and punctuality, including working closely with the local authority. However, these approaches are not having as much impact as they could on improving pupils' overall attendance over time

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

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides strong, purposeful leadership. Together with an effective and hardworking leadership team, she has established a clear vision based on improving pupil outcomes, raising aspirations and developing pupils' engagement in learning. The headteacher sets high expectations for staff, and supports and challenges staff to meet these successfully. Senior leaders have introduced many sound strategies to improve provision for pupils, including opportunities for teachers to share effective classroom practice and developing new methods for planning the school's curriculum.

The staffing structure is appropriate and staff share responsibilities effectively. All members of staff have a clear understanding of their responsibility for securing continuous improvement and they carry out their roles well. The regular staff meetings to discuss pupil progress ensure that all teachers take responsibility for the standards pupils achieve and the progress they make in class.

The school is an effective learning community. The performance management arrangements for staff are robust and all staff have access to relevant professional development opportunities, including valuable opportunities for staff to improve their skills and to share good practice within the school and with others. For example, the school has recently established links with neighbouring schools to work collaboratively on developing the quality of teacher feedback and the observation of good practice in the foundation phase.

School leaders have established comprehensive systems to evaluate the school's performance. They use a wide range of first-hand evidence to provide an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, including analysis of pupils' performance, scrutiny of pupils' books and learning walks. Leaders and managers consider the views of pupils purposefully, for example when devising the new homework arrangements. All staff contribute effectively to the school's development plan and play a significant role in evaluating pupil outcomes and the successful implementation of actions within the plan.

Overall, leaders ensure that strategic plans are successful in meeting national and local priorities. For example, teachers' plans to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are effective and most pupils make good progress in these key areas. However, strategies linked to increasing attendance and improving pupils' Welsh language skills in key stage 2 are less effective.

The governing body is supportive and knows the school and the community it serves well. The headteacher, senior leaders and groups of pupils regularly provide detailed reports to governors on the work of the school. As a result, governors have a good understanding of developments in the school and its targets for improvement. Governors have begun to gather first-hand evidence of teaching and learning through learning walks and scrutiny of pupils' work. This process is at an early stage of development.

The school uses its purposeful indoor areas and its stimulating and extensive outdoor areas effectively to support teaching and learning. The headteacher, with the support of the governing body, manages the school budget effectively. They target finances well to meet pupils' needs and to support priorities in the school's development plan. Leaders link expenditure to strategic priorities and staff training

effectively. The school makes very effective use of the pupil development grant, for example to improve reading and numeracy skills through intervention sessions. As a result, the targeted pupils have full access to the same experiences as other pupils and most make good progress from their starting points.

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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