



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

A report on

**Myddelton College
Peakes Lane
Denbigh
LL16 3EN**

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by

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

About Myddelton College

Myddelton College is a co-educational independent boarding and day school for pupils from 9 to 18 years, located in Denbigh, North Wales. The school was founded in September 2016 and is administered by IQ Education Limited, a company that has another school in England and links to several schools in China.

There are currently 215 pupils in the school. These include 34 pupils in the primary section and 179 in the senior section, including 43 in the sixth form. There is little difference in the total number of boys and girls although this varies in particular year groups across the school.

Around 68% of pupils are day pupils who live in Denbighshire, Flintshire or Conwy and about 32% are international pupils drawn from 16 different nationalities.

Almost 23% of pupils come from minority ethnic groups. About 32% of pupils speak English as an additional language. A very few pupils speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard. The school does not aim to make pupils bilingual in English and Welsh, but does offer opportunities for pupils in key stages 2 and 3 to study Welsh second language. A very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The school offers additional learning support to a very few pupils, mainly to support their literacy development or general learning difficulties.

Pupils are not selected by ability. Admissions into any year group include an interview with the headteacher and entrance base-line assessments that enable the school to establish a starting point for prospective pupils.

The senior leadership team consists of the headteacher, two deputy headteachers and two assistant headteachers. The headteacher took up his post in 2017. This is the school's first full inspection.

The school describes its ethos as being based around '21st century learning' and 'the three pillars of resilience, scholarship and fellowship'. The school places great emphasis on developing the whole person 'to be independent learners in the globalised modern economy'.

Summary

Myddelton College is a vibrant international learning community where pupils share a great sense of belonging. Nearly all pupils are highly motivated learners who display exemplary behaviour.

In lessons and over time, many pupils make steady progress in their learning. Most younger pupils develop particularly secure knowledge and understanding of curriculum-related skills. As they progress through the senior school, many pupils make steady progress in developing their subject knowledge. However, a minority of pupils do not make suitable progress largely because tasks do not match their ability well enough.

Nearly all pupils enjoy their lessons and are eager to learn, especially during the innovative 'learning through the outdoors' programme. A particularly strong feature of the teaching is the very positive working relationships between pupils and staff. However, overall, there is too much variation in the quality of teaching and assessment.

The school celebrates diversity meaningfully, with committed staff providing a high level of care support and guidance for their pupils. The headteacher provides reflective and motivational leadership for the school, with strong teamwork and direction to secure its aims.

The school meets all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

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

Compliance with the regulations for registration

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The suitability of proprietors and staff

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The provision of information

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Recommendations

R1 Raise standards at key stage 4, particularly in mathematics and science

R2 Improve the consistency of teaching and assessment across the school

R3 Strengthen the effectiveness of middle leaders

What happens next

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on enhancing pupils' wellbeing and attitudes to learning through an enriched outdoor-curriculum

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

In lessons and over time, many pupils make steady progress in their learning. At key stage 2, most pupils develop particularly secure knowledge and understanding of curriculum-related skills. As they progress through the senior school, many pupils make steady progress in developing their subject knowledge. They have secure recall of their previous learning and use this suitably to help them in their current work. A minority of pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Often this is because tasks do not match their ability well enough or there is not a suitable level of challenge.

Throughout the school, most pupils are careful and considerate listeners. They listen attentively to their teacher and their peers, think about the issues raised and use their subject knowledge aptly to make well-informed responses. Many make effective use of subject terminology and an extended vocabulary to present their ideas clearly and confidently. For example, Year 7 pupils discuss their ideas thoughtfully about who they might want to include in a modern day version of *The Canterbury Tales*. A few pupils' language skills are not developed well enough. These pupils do not find it easy to understand and access information through verbal explanations.

Throughout the school, most pupils' reading skills are well developed. Most younger pupils read fluently, with confidence and good expression. They explain eagerly what they have read and predict the possible ending for stories such as 'How to train your dragon'. In the senior school, many pupils read appropriately from a variety of different sources to provide themselves with the information that they need to complete their work. They identify and evaluate different interpretations of facts and evidence, and use this to present their ideas in a convincing way, both orally and in writing. For example, during house registration activities pupils identify news items regularly in the media to share with their peers by evaluating the text for convincing or persuasive features. A few pupils do not always use suitable strategies to breakdown unfamiliar words.

At key stage 2, most pupils make assured progress in developing their writing skills. The majority apply high levels of grammar and punctuation skills to produce proficient writing in a range of contexts. For example, nearly all Year 6 pupils use rhetorical questions skilfully in scientific report writing about the digestive system to evoke the reader's attention in the opening paragraph. They use a variety of sentence types to good effect, including use of parenthesis.

In the senior school, the majority of pupils have a secure understanding of writing for different purposes and they make appropriate vocabulary choices to suit the style. For example, when writing a job application letter, pupils use appropriate formal language and construct a clear and well-organised case for their suitability for the role. Many more able pupils are particularly adept at producing detailed responses and reaching thoughtful conclusions supported by evidence such as in history to explain the consequences of the Cuban Missile Crisis. However, a few older pupils' written work contains too many basic spelling, punctuation and grammar errors, and it is poorly presented and structured.

At key stage 2, almost all pupils develop assured numeracy skills, which they use effectively in lessons across the curriculum. This use includes measuring angles accurately to draw the mirrors in a periscope in science, and in history calculating the percentage crime change with increased policing in the Victorian era. As they progress through the senior school, many pupils develop greater confidence in their ability to describe and explain the strategies and reasoning for the approaches that they take in their numeracy work. For example, in psychology, Year 12 pupils analyse scatter grams thoroughly to find the relationship between the amount of sleep taken and the ability to concentrate. A few older pupils do not have secure number skills and understanding of key mathematical concepts. They struggle to recall common numerical facts and make sensible estimates.

Almost all pupils are competent in using their well-developed information and communication technology (ICT) skills to support their learning. They use their devices routinely and effectively for research purposes, note taking, presentations, sharing ideas and storing and retrieving information. For example, in humanities, key stage 3 pupils investigate and produce interesting and informative electronic presentations on deforestation using innovative approaches to create dramatic effect and highlight specific features.

In relation to their age, many pupils develop useful thinking skills. They plan, monitor and evaluate their work regularly making effective use of investigation, reflection and analytical skills. Many older pupils are skilful at analysing different sources of evidence critically to justify their interpretation and approach. They use valid subject reasoning and give balanced viewpoints before reaching suitable conclusions such as when considering the differing perspectives of Trotsky's role in the Russian Civil War.

Due to the small number of pupils in key stage 4 and the sixth form over the last two years, it is not possible to report on the school's performance and trends over time.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils share a great sense of belonging to their school community and thrive in developing their personal and social skills. Their behaviour is exemplary.

Throughout the school, nearly all pupils are polite and respectful to adults and their peers and show great care and consideration for one another. For example, the welcoming and supportive attitudes of the pupils have impacted positively on the integration of new pupils to the school. Most pupils form positive friendships across all age groups, particularly within their house 'family'. This makes an important contribution to their personal development.

Nearly all pupils are highly motivated and enthusiastic learners. Most arrive at lessons promptly, engage quickly with their tasks, share ideas and listen with interest to others. The majority of pupils show strong independent learning skills such as by choosing the level of tasks or the way in which they present their research. Almost all pupils cooperate effectively in paired or group activities, for example researching and selecting short film clips together for their presentations.

Pupils from a wide range of cultural backgrounds integrate positively and enjoy celebrating their diversity. Almost all pupils have a developing awareness of world events and current affairs, which they research and discuss during the weekly house registration activities.

Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in school. They know whom to speak to if they are upset or have a concern and are confident that the school will deal with any incidents quickly and appropriately.

Pupils enjoy and value highly their participation in the school's learning through the outdoors programme, which includes activities such as mountain walking, kayaking, bush-craft and climbing. Most pupils develop strong resilience and beneficial personal and social skills through participating in this innovative programme. For example, they strengthen their organisational, time keeping and teamwork skills successfully, and recognise that several activities can push them out of their comfort zones.

Many pupils make healthy eating choices and recognise how these choices affect their wellbeing. In addition to physical education in the curriculum, many pupils participate in related co-curricular activities such as fitness training and sports clubs.

Almost all pupils take part regularly in lunchtime and after school activities such as gardening, debating and chess. Such activities enhance pupils' enjoyment in their learning.

Most pupils demonstrate the capacity to take on leadership roles through their strong communication skills and sense of responsibility. For example, key stage 2 pupils lead assembly confidently and other pupils in their roles as members of the student parliament or as prefects. However, pupils' ability to contribute to a range of decision making across the school is at an early stage of development. Overall, pupils do not have enough opportunities for leadership roles within the school, including in the classroom.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

The school provides a curriculum that is broad and balanced and meets the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. Pupils have valuable opportunities to develop important life skills through, for example, the learning through the outdoors programme and the strong focus on developing pupils' ICT skills.

The learning through the outdoors programme is a strength of the school's timetabled curriculum. The programme has a well thought out scheme of work with a clear progression and assessment framework. All pupils participate in the programme, which is very popular with them, and they understand its purpose and how it supports their learning and personal development.

The school provides a wide range of engaging co-curricular activities. These include sporting and creative activities such as choir, tap dancing and ukulele. These activities are popular and well attended and enhance learning opportunities well.

During lessons, nearly all teachers establish very positive working relationships and purposeful learning environments. Most teachers have secure subject knowledge. Many use this knowledge successfully to explore different concepts with pupils, to probe their understanding and to address any misconceptions or errors. In a few cases, teachers' extensive subject expertise, coupled with their enthusiasm and knowledge of their pupils, helps them to generate stimulating classroom discussions, which most pupils are eager to join in.

Most teachers know their pupils well, their strengths and the areas that they have the greatest difficulty with in their learning. The majority of teachers use this knowledge well to build on pupils' prior understanding by planning lessons and supporting pupils at a suitable level. However, in a minority of lessons, teaching does not meet the needs of all pupils. Often this is because tasks do not match pupils' abilities well enough or the teaching lacks pace and challenge. In a few lessons, more able pupils are not stretched enough.

Many teachers select a wide range of activities and resources to engage and motivate pupils, often enabling them to use different problem solving strategies from real-life contexts. This approach is particularly helpful in developing pupils' thinking skills. The majority of teachers make effective use of technology to present lesson activities and learning materials to engage pupils. However, in a minority of lessons the use of technology does not support pupils' learning suitably. For example, in a few cases it constrains pupils' thinking, leads to brief undeveloped responses and limits opportunities to produce well-crafted written responses.

Many teachers provide timely oral feedback during lessons to help motivate pupils and to provide support or address errors for them to improve. Pupils respond well to the specific advice provided, including showing a willingness to 'just try it'.

The majority of teachers provide useful written comments to help pupils to improve. In the best cases, teachers' feedback has a clear focus on key concepts and skills and provides useful advice to which pupils respond positively. Overall, there is too much variation in the quality of feedback to pupils. A minority of teachers do not give specific advice on how pupils can improve their work or ensure that pupils respond to any comments or errors. A few over praise work that has required little effort by pupils.

The development of pupils' ICT skills is supported well by their extensive use of electronic devices in lessons. The provision for the progressive development of pupils' literacy across the curriculum is at an early stage. For example, the school has recently implemented a scheme to support pupils by reading in small groups. The school's arrangements for developing pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum are limited.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is an effective international learning community, which celebrates diversity meaningfully and provides a high level of care support and guidance for its pupils. The well-considered support that pupils receive from staff makes a valuable contribution to their strong sense of wellbeing. Staff develop pupils' understanding of their culture, the local community and the wider world successfully, through

assemblies, house registration activities and school events. In the house registration activities, pupils research and discuss global issues regularly. In addition, the school holds an annual international fair where pupils create stalls celebrating their culture, national dress and food.

Pupils' personal development is promoted effectively through the school's personal, social and health education programme. The programme provides a comprehensive range of age-appropriate topics including, government, law and order, the media and mental health. Sixth form pupils also benefit from sessions focussing on stress management and mindfulness.

Provision to help pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles is beneficial. For example, the traffic light labelling of food in the school canteen helps to develop pupils' understanding of a healthy diet. The school provides a wide range of co-curricular physical activities, including ballet, taekwondo and ultimate frisbee. In addition, the learning through the outdoors programme develops increased levels of fitness as well as skills of co-operation, trust and resilience.

The school provides pupils with useful opportunities to prepare them to become active citizens. For example, all houses raise money for charitable organisations and pupils are encouraged to help those less fortunate than themselves such as by taking gifts to a local hospice. However, opportunities to hold positions of responsibility within the school and to influence its work are limited.

The recent introduction of a new management information system is improving the sharing of key learning information between staff about the pupils that they teach. Staff generally use this information suitably to ensure that they have a clear understanding of pupils' strengths and areas for improvement. In consultation with parents and staff, the school prepares and shares detailed individual learning plans for all pupils. In addition, pupils with additional learning needs write informative pen portraits of themselves, outlining where they need support and these are shared with parents and staff. In a few cases, this collective information is not used well enough to inform teaching plans and ensure that the needs of all learners are met.

The school is beginning to use data from its tracking system and other information ably to analyse the performance of different groups of pupils. For example, reports on individual pupil attendance are used effectively to devise personalised strategies to help improve attendance, where needed. The school also uses tracking information suitably to provide helpful support for pupils with additional learning needs and for many pupils with English as an additional language.

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

Leadership and management: Good

The proprietor, headteacher and senior leaders have been successful in establishing the school as a vibrant, engaging and innovative international learning community. Since its inception, there has been a healthy growth in pupil numbers, in part due to the opening of the preparatory school.

The headteacher provides reflective and motivational leadership. Since his appointment, he has established a strong, nurturing community ethos and succeeded in embedding the school's vision based on 'the three pillars of resilience, scholarship and fellowship'. After a difficult and extremely challenging initial period for the school, leaders are now implementing suitable structures and strategies to improve outcomes and provision. The school has also taken steps to establish a governing body to oversee, support and challenge its work appropriately.

Together with the senior leadership team, the headteacher provides clear direction for all areas of the school's work. He is supportive of colleagues but has also taken appropriate action where necessary to challenge underperformance and strengthen provision. Roles and responsibilities are set out clearly in detailed and specific job descriptions. Line management arrangements are helping to provide the necessary level of support and challenge to staff.

Through regular briefings and a range of team meetings at all levels, leaders communicate effectively with staff and ensure that the school operates efficiently on a day-to-day basis. Parents are well informed about all aspects of the school's work and consulted beneficially about specific initiatives such as the use of ICT.

The school is implementing suitable quality assurance arrangements, including a programme of departmental reviews, lesson observations, learning walks and work scrutiny. Middle leaders consider pupils' progress carefully and analyse rigorously their performance in external examinations. These activities are helping leaders to acquire a secure understanding of the school's strengths as well as areas for improvement. These are addressed appropriately through well-understood priorities and a range of relevant actions in the school improvement plan. However, over time, the quality of middle leadership has varied too much. While this issue is now being remedied through the school's quality improvement arrangements, it is too early to see the sustained impact of this work on teaching and the standards pupils achieve.

There is an appropriate emphasis on supporting staff professional development. For example, the school has introduced a programme of 'learning squares' for peer observations recently to help promote best practice in teaching and learning. However, performance management arrangements are not embedded fully throughout the school and do not contribute enough to supporting staff development or school improvement

The school manages its resources effectively. There is a suitable number of well-qualified and experienced staff to deliver the curriculum. The school provides an engaging learning environment and makes excellent use of the stimulating natural location through its learning through the outdoors programme. The proprietor ensures that all budgets are monitored robustly. There has been a particularly strong focus on recruitment both within the United Kingdom and internationally.

The school meets all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Copies of the report

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

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.

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

Excellent	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 163 of the Education Act 2002. The main purpose of inspection under this section is to report on compliance with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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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