



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

A report on

Drefach Primary School

**Heol Blaenhirwaun
Drefach
Llanelli
Carmarthenshire
SA14 7AN**

Date of inspection: July 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Drefach Primary School

Name of provider	Drefach Primary School
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh-medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	49
Pupils of statutory school age	39
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	8
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 21.3%)</i>	19.3%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 22.2%)</i>	25.6%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	25.6%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	5%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2005
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	08/11/2011
Additional information	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different from those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website:
mylocalschool.gov.wales

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- a) The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Drefach Primary School is a happy and caring community where caring for pupils' wellbeing provides a firm foundation for all of its work. The school is federated with Cross Hands C.P. School and both schools work together closely and successfully. The headteacher, leaders and members of the governing body have an effective overview of progress across both schools and they allocate resources effectively. Staff at both schools are employed by the federation and, as a result, there is beneficial flexibility that facilitates close co-operation. For example, teachers work together closely across the federation when leading aspects of the Curriculum for Wales. Self-evaluation procedures are rigorous and allow leaders to target priorities across the federation.

Nearly all pupils make appropriate progress in terms of developing their basic skills. They listen carefully to each other and speak with increasing confidence with support from adults. However, they have a tendency to turn to English with their friends too often. Pupils' reading and writing skills are developing well. Older pupils apply their skills successfully across the curriculum, particularly their creative skills. Across the school, there is a close and supportive working relationship between staff and pupils. Teachers plan a rich range of activities that nurture increasing independence among the pupils. Teachers question effectively to encourage thinking and to give pupils an opportunity to develop their ideas.

Staff use technology skilfully to facilitate co-operation with Cross Hands School. The school is a central part of its community and pupils enrich the relationship through activities such as visiting the local shop to buy ingredients to make a picnic at the school.

Recommendations

R1 Improve pupils' Welsh oral and writing skills

R2 Ensure an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils

What happens next

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

Main findings

Learning

On entry to the school, most pupils' skills are lower than the level expected for their age. Nearly all pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make appropriate progress during their time there. By the end of their time at the school, they apply their creative skills very well in a range of areas of learning.

Most pupils' listening skills in the youngest years are good. They listen carefully to each other and adults and respond to them appropriately. With regular support from adults, the youngest pupils' oral skills develop effectively. By Year 2, a majority speak Welsh with increasing confidence and talk with pride about their work and experiences, for example about Trench the tarantula's visit to the class.

A majority of older pupils develop their oral skills appropriately in Welsh and English. They respond well to questions and contribute purposefully to class discussions and debates, for example when discussing hot topics in the '*Gwener Geiriol*' or 'Fireworks Friday' sessions. However, a minority have a tendency to turn to English rather than persevering with conversations in Welsh. These pupils do not have a sound enough grasp of Welsh syntax and a lack of vocabulary hinders their ability to discuss their work confidently.

Most of the youngest pupils are beginning to recognise the form and sound of letters well and their reading skills are developing appropriately. They use an appropriate range of phonic strategies to read familiar words successfully. By Year 2, a majority read simple books correctly and show a sound understanding of the text. Many older pupils read intelligently in various contexts in both languages. They vary their tone of voice and use punctuation correctly to show their understanding. They also develop their higher-order reading skills purposefully to gather information from different sources, for example when comparing two international countries.

Most pupils' early writing skills are developing well. Most of the youngest pupils make marks purposefully both inside and outside the classroom and begin to form letters and write simple words. By the middle of the school, many write in an appropriate range of contexts for different audiences. Many older pupils build on their writing skills appropriately in Welsh. However, their limited vocabulary affects their ability to write at length. The standard of many pupils' English writing is sound. They demonstrate a sound grasp of familiar spelling patterns, paragraphs and punctuation, for example when writing a diary from the perspective of a soldier during the war.

In the youngest years, most pupils make good progress in their mathematical development. By Year 2, they have an intelligent grasp of number and measurement facts and handle money correctly. They apply their skills frequently in the different learning areas. For example, they practise their measuring skills purposefully by estimating the height of different magic beanstalks. By the top of the school, they have a secure understanding of mathematical properties. This enables them to find the volume of composite 3D shapes successfully. Most older pupils apply their numeracy skills effectively across the curriculum.

Many pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developing well. In the youngest years, most pupils control a programmable toy correctly to follow a specific path. By Year 2, they combine their skills successfully, for example by coding a program to create a simple animation. Most older pupils' skills build firmly on this foundation.

Most pupils' physical skills are developing soundly through a variety of beneficial experiences and activities. The youngest pupils develop their fine motor skills successfully, for example by kneading playdough while listening to music. Pupils in the middle of the school develop their physical skills by taking part in regular energetic activities in the outdoor area and older pupils take part in physical education activities frequently, such as tennis and swimming lessons.

Many pupils are developing their creative skills suitably. By the top of the school, they apply their skills to create pieces of artwork, dance and music skilfully. For example, they compare Halloween celebrations with Dia de Mertos (Day of the Dead) in Mexico and respond to music by following a story map. After reflecting, they create an original piece of music with a specific beginning, middle and end.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils feel happy at school. They feel safe within its homely and inclusive environment and are willing to discuss any concerns with members of staff. Pupils are polite and respectful towards each other, towards adults in the classrooms and at less formal times. They discuss their feelings confidently in their classes on a daily basis, which contributes to pupils' emotional wellbeing effectively. Nearly all pupils are kind towards each other and greet visitors in a friendly manner. They hold doors for others while they move around the school and treat each other with respect. Most pupils are well behaved.

Most pupils listen attentively in their classes and enjoy learning new concepts. They show enthusiasm and interest in their work and persevere to complete their tasks. They discuss their work confidently with their peers and respond well to feedback from staff. Most pupils contribute purposefully to their learning by providing ideas and asking questions about the theme. As a result, teachers adapt activities often to pursue pupils' lines of enquiry.

Most pupils develop a sound understanding of the importance of being moral citizens. They discuss their feelings with their peers sensitively and show empathy, which contributes well to their social skills. Most pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe online. The 'Eco Heroes' listen to the views of their peers and take excellent care of the school grounds, for example by picking up litter during break times.

Most pupils have a good understanding of the need to keep fit and eat healthily. For example, older pupils have studied and measured the effect of sugar on the body. They have regular physical education lessons and physical reflection sessions, which ensure that most pupils are aware of the importance of physical activity. They contribute well to assemblies and lessons that promote important issues, such as their understanding of fairness, equality and sustainability.

Following the pandemic, inspectors are not reporting on pupil attendance rates during the 2021-2022 academic year. Instead, the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance will be reported on as part of Inspection Area 4.

Teaching and learning experiences

All staff work diligently to ensure strong working relationships with all pupils. They manage pupils' behaviour positively and work hard to nurture an inclusive and hard-working relationship. As a result, the learning environment is supportive and stimulating and develops pupils' enthusiasm towards their learning. In the best practice, staff's presentations are lively and stimulate children to learn enthusiastically. On these occasions, staff vary their teaching techniques effectively by ensuring that pupils work independently, in pairs and in groups. They question them skilfully and encourage them to think deeply and consider their responses. Staff intervene skilfully at times to move learning forward with individuals and groups. Although staff have a sound knowledge of pupils' ability and needs, progress-tracking procedures are not incisive enough to enable them to provide an appropriate level of challenge consistently for all groups of pupils

Teachers explain new concepts effectively. They remind pupils about previous learning and make useful links with their current work. Teachers provide learning experiences that engage nearly all pupils' interest and prepare activities that motivate them to learn. For example, older pupils make 'bath bombs' for the family. As a result, they develop their creative, scientific and mathematical skills effectively while planning and making the products. Teachers use praise and feedback purposefully to celebrate pupils' successes and guide them to the next steps in their learning. Opportunities for pupils to assess and reflect on their own performance and that of other pupils are developing appropriately. However, staff do not take advantage of opportunities to reinforce and develop pupils' understanding and use of the Welsh language regularly enough.

Across the federation, teachers plan valuable opportunities jointly to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum jointly. As a result, pupils' standards and the way in which they apply these skills in different contexts across the curriculum are developing soundly. In the best practice, teachers plan purposefully to develop pupils' extended writing skills. However, this is not consistent across the federation.

The school is preparing purposefully to plan and introduce the Curriculum for Wales. It is experimenting with various tasks that are planned purposefully in line with the six areas of learning and experience and the statements of what matters. The wider principles of the curriculum are developing effectively while nurturing pupils to become adventurous and creative learners.

Care, support and guidance

All staff work well together to create a caring community and a safe learning environment. The school has a clear vision, which ensures that the health and wellbeing of all pupils are a continuous priority. The school provide a variety of opportunities for pupils to keep fit through purposeful activities, which include visiting a local forest, the school grounds and conducting valuable sessions that promote

mental and physical reflection. The school has purposeful arrangements for eating and drinking healthily and pupils understand what they need to do to stay healthy. Pupils are given opportunities for develop their creative and physical skills appropriately, for example by performing a musical rap to the poem '*Caredigrwydd*' ('Kindness'). This develops pupils' creative skills and self-confidence and makes a beneficial contribution to nurturing pupils' respect towards their work.

The inclusive ethos and visits from the community promote pupils' moral and spiritual development well, with opportunities to reflect on current affairs and other religions. They plan well for multicultural communities and diverse relationships, which contributes well to their moral and social development. The school has established a strong culture of respect and equality within its community, for example by devising and creating a motto for the school, a new logo across the federation and receiving a new bench for the playground from the 'Men's Sheds' charity. This is highlighted with the successful campaign led by pupils recently to collect for a charity in Ukraine.

Teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to influence aspects of the school's life and work. As a result, members of the 'squads' and councils respond to their peers' needs well. Staff promote the importance of good behaviour, courtesy and respect successfully.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is sound and supports pupils' needs appropriately. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) works well with external agencies to provide purposeful sessions that meet pupils' needs. Appropriate interventions also support pupils with needs to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. However, arrangements for evaluating the effectiveness of these interventions are limited. The school provides purposeful individual development plans for pupils, which include opportunities to review them regularly.

The school has appropriate systems for monitoring pupils' attendance. It works effectively with welfare agencies to promote good attendance. They have effective arrangements to contact the home when pupils are absent. All of the school's staff work together effectively to create a happy community and a safe ethos within the school. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management

Leaders, teachers and assistants share a clear vision to develop the Cross Hands and Drefach primary school federation. This vision is based on close co-operation to promote pupils' wellbeing and progress. Leaders promote opportunities to share practice and expertise to develop pupils' confidence and curiosity towards their learning.

The role of the governing body is key in maintaining the momentum of co-operation across the federation. Members of the governing body know the schools very well. They support the headteacher and leaders effectively to develop elements of provision continuously. The schools' work is promoted significantly as staff are employed by the federation rather than the individual schools. As a result, leaders have useful flexibility to respond in line with the needs of both schools. This means

that the governing body can allocate human resources to different classes in line with needs at the time.

Leaders have established rigorous procedures for identifying strengths and areas for development within the schools in the federation. Leaders and staff have detailed knowledge of the individual schools' strengths and a good understanding of the importance of working in partnership. They conduct a wide range of scrutiny activities, which include regular input from members of the governing body. This work focuses on different aspects of provision and allows them to have a useful strategic overview of the work of both schools and respond to their improvement needs. For example, they have prioritised the need to promote provision to boost pupils' Welsh oracy. Leaders manage the budget carefully and allocate money and resources to meet the current needs of the federation.

Leaders have created a positive culture and ethos that promotes and supports the professional learning of all staff successfully. Teachers and assistants state that they are given regular and valuable opportunities to share practice and expertise across the federation and that they benefit greatly from this work. There have been opportunities to focus on teaching to develop the staff's understanding of the importance of pedagogy in preparing for the Curriculum for Wales. Staff have also focused on ensuring consistency in the level of challenge that is provided for pupils, although there is room to improve this further.

Leaders plan beneficial opportunities for staff's professional development, including a range of valuable training. For example, leaders responded to the aspirations of members of the schools' support staff by facilitating an opportunity for them to attend training to qualify as higher-level assistants and shoulder wider responsibilities. They now work together closely and this has had a positive effect on provision for the federation's youngest pupils. Arrangements to promote professional development link directly with the school's priorities for improvement, for example by preparing for elements of the Curriculum for Wales. Leaders allocate shared responsibilities to teachers and support staff across the federation. This has led to developing leadership skills and an awareness of the importance of evaluating the quality of provision and achievement across the different classes.

Leaders link professional learning clearly with self-evaluation findings and the school's priorities for improvement. They acknowledge effective features across both schools within the federation. Procedures for leading the Curriculum for Wales' areas of learning and experience are beginning to become embedded and provide a firm foundation for the federation to build on. Leaders and staff across the federation share good practice and also take advantage of opportunities to visit other schools to discuss and observe practice there. For example, teachers who work with pupils of the same age work together to present lessons, with one present in the class and the other present on a screen. This kind of activity promotes close and beneficial co-operation.

The school has beneficial partnerships with a range of agencies. There is a close-knit and supportive relationship between the school and parents. They work together closely to share information about pupils' progress and to discuss their wellbeing.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body/members of the management committee through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior, middle leaders, and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work 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 lessons, including learning support groups and the specialist resource base (where appropriate), 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 (where appropriate) and in outdoor areas
- visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning (where appropriate)
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs
- 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 (<http://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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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