



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

A report on

Ysgol Emmanuel

**Victoria Road
Rhyl
LL18 2EG**

Date of inspection: June 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol Emmanuel

Name of provider	Ysgol Emmanuel
Local authority	Denbighshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	466
Pupils of statutory school age	348
Number in nursery classes	59
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%)	52.2%
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%)	19.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	4.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2020
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/01/2015
Start date of inspection	05/06/2023

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

The headteacher, through transformational leadership, has in a relatively short period of time created a highly effective team ethos amongst staff, which is built on positive relationships, trust and collaboration. She has brought out the very best in the school's staff by encouraging and empowering them to make the best use of their skills and experience, for example by providing outstanding support for pupils and their families in the local community. Overall, school leaders address national priorities well, including curriculum and additional learning needs (ALN) reform and tackling the impact of poverty on pupil progress. Through robust monitoring, leaders are aware that they need to improve the standard of pupils' Welsh language. Across the school, leaders, including school governors, have high expectations of themselves and staff and high aspirations for all pupils.

Nearly all pupils enjoy their time at Ysgol Emmanuel Primary School. They develop high levels of respect for the adults who look after them and trust that staff will always act in their best interests. They behave well, engage positively with the varied range of learning experiences and opportunities that the school provides and develop a strong sense of belonging to its community. During their time at the school, most pupils, including those in the nurture and resource provisions, make good progress from where they start. They develop a love of reading and speak with excitement about their learning, particularly about opportunities to be physically active. Although they develop good mathematical skills and knowledge, they do not always use these skills often enough in their work across the curriculum. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Most are eager to do well and to take on new challenges. In a few classes, pupils are beginning to develop useful skills that help them to reflect on their learning and to think about how they could improve their work. However, pupils do not generally have enough opportunities to engage in this important work.

Staff know the pupils, their needs and interests extremely well. In the mainstream school and the nurture and resource provisions, they provide high levels of care, support and guidance that enable pupils to enjoy school and participate effectively in learning. Staff provide a broad and balanced curriculum that matches the ethos and aspirations of the Curriculum for Wales. This is evident in work to explore ideas such as 'belonging' that provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers use a range of strategies, such as effective questioning techniques, to support pupils' understanding. Throughout the school, they plan valuable opportunities for learning through practical activities and exploration. For example, the well-considered provision for play enables pupils to develop their communication, personal, social and physical skills successfully.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen the quality of feedback to pupils so that they understand how to move their learning forward
- R2 Provide more opportunities for pupils to extend their numeracy skills across the curriculum

R3 Improve pupils' Welsh language skills

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to Implementing a whole-school approach to well-being, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time in school, many pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, make strong progress in most areas of the curriculum. Most pupils with ALN in the resource provision and across the school make effective progress from their starting points.

Many pupils make strong progress in developing their English oracy skills. Younger pupils talk with confidence about their learning and use a developing range of vocabulary. For example, they explain how to play a game or describe the minibeasts they find outdoors. Most older pupils use their listening and speaking skills well to support their learning. For instance, they share ideas and listen to the contribution of other's successfully as they collaborate to create freeze frames inspired by a familiar story.

When they start school, most pupils begin to learn a few Welsh words such as the weather and simple greetings effectively. Many older pupils learn new Welsh language vocabulary such as body parts well and a few use simple phrases as they provide directions for a programmable toy. However, most pupils' use of Welsh language across the school is underdeveloped.

Many pupils across the school show enthusiasm for reading and make strong progress in this area of their learning. Pupils in the reception classes learn letter sounds rapidly. They become familiar with technical vocabulary such as 'digraph', which supports them to identify and blend sounds together to read unknown words successfully. In Year 2, many pupils read simple texts confidently taking good account of punctuation. They read with understanding, such as when they make thoughtful suggestions to explain the feelings of a story character. Older pupils build on this progress well and develop a range of strategies to become fluent independent readers. They have a sound understanding of the structure of texts and an effective understanding of the literary techniques they encounter, such as rhetorical questions and emotive language.

Overall, most pupils make effective progress in developing their writing skills. From a young age, they show enthusiasm when experimenting with mark making and letter formation. Many quickly learn to apply their knowledge of letter sounds effectively. For example, they make plausible attempts to spell complex words when independently writing a postcard to a friend or a letter to a story character. Older pupils develop their writing skills well and apply them in a range of relevant contexts across the curriculum such as letters, newspaper reports and persuasive texts. They often show effective awareness of the reader, using language and punctuation to good effect. A particular feature of pupils' writing is the communication of empathy and care for others. For example, pupils in Year 2 write thoughtful poems about love and pupils in Year 5 write with sensitivity about the plight of a fictional child refugee.

In general, most pupils develop their understanding of the different areas of mathematics well. Most younger pupils gain a firm grasp of numbers and their value. For example, they recognise number digits when using a toy telephone and count a friend's fingers in English and Welsh with accuracy. Pupils in Year 2 develop a good understanding of time and measures, such as when they measure a range of objects to the nearest centimetre with accuracy. By Year 6, most pupils work with large numbers confidently and have a firm understanding of fractions and decimal notation. In a few cases, pupils apply their mathematical skills in authentic contexts. However generally, across the school, pupils do not develop their numeracy skills well enough.

Throughout the school, most pupils develop their physical and creative skills well. Younger pupils develop their imagination effectively, such as when they build a house in the role-play construction site or a make a detailed pirate ship that is looking for treasure. In Year 3, pupils develop their drawing skills well as they produce imaginative dragon self-portraits inspired by a familiar story. Pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 develop their understanding of rhythm and musicality successfully through regular Samba drumming workshops.

Across the school pupils use their digital skills to support their learning well. For example, younger pupils programme a toy successfully to navigate around a path and make informative video presentations about a train ride. In Year 4, many pupils use QR codes effectively, for instance to link to a video that enhances their understanding of the human digestive system. Many older pupils use different presentation apps to record their work on a variety of topics and themes. However, pupils' understanding of how to use or create spreadsheets and databases is limited.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils are very happy to attend school, are keen to learn and engage enthusiastically in their lessons. The strong, respectful relationship between staff and pupils enables them to learn and develop as well-rounded individuals. They show pride in their school and their work and feel safe within its inclusive and caring ethos. The pupils value the fact that adults in the school listen to their views and take them into account when considering decisions that affect them. A good example of this is when the School Council contributed to the school's behaviour policy before it went to the governing body to be agreed.

Pupils are courteous and welcoming to adults and visitors and, overall, their behaviour is very good. Most pupils collaborate well and show respect for the

contributions of their peers. They develop well as capable and ambitious learners, have positive attitudes to learning and show strong interest in their work, talking enthusiastically about school life. Most pupils are confident and delighted to engage in conversations about their learning. For instance, they talk excitedly when discussing their love of books and reading. Most pupils listen attentively to teachers and concentrate well on their work during lessons. They approach tasks eagerly and are keen to succeed. When given the opportunity, pupils value the feedback given from their teachers to improve their learning and use this to successfully edit and improve their work.

As they progress through the school, most pupils develop their resilience and are determined to do their best. For example, in Year 5, pupils demonstrated good collaborative working skills whilst building a den in the forest school area. A few pupils found the activity difficult, but by discussing the problem collectively they found a different solution that enabled them to create a den successfully. By Year 6, pupils demonstrate good levels of independence and are quite resourceful. These key learning skills impact positively on their ability to persevere and look for new solutions when they face obstacles.

Almost all pupils develop their physical skills well. They play together enthusiastically at break and lunch times, for example when playing football, basketball and co-operating on the playground gym. This has a positive impact on their physical well-being. Overall, all pupils take full advantage of the purposeful outdoor learning environment and take part in an extensive range of activities to keep fit and active. Most pupils confidently discuss healthy food choices and are encouraged to do so by all staff in the school. There are a wide variety of after-school clubs on offer for most pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 and these are well attended. They include the school choir, art club and the 'Snip and pin' sewing club.

Pupils are developing very well as ethically, informed citizens. They take on leadership roles and responsibilities and play a full and active part in the life and work of the school. For example, the Eco Council encourage their peers to be litter conscious around school and the local community, such as when they take part in litter picks outside school and in the local parks to protect children and animals. Most pupils understand their rights and responsibilities through their work on the United Nations Rights of the Child. Each class have their own 'Super Ambassadors' who ensure that children's rights are promoted throughout the school. The 'Criw Cymraeg' promotes the use of incidental Welsh in the school and on the playground. Pupils from the resource provision take their responsibilities as 'Play Leaders' very seriously, encouraging all pupils to take part in activities during play time.

Most pupils have a strong understanding of the need to be careful when using the internet. Through their work with the local police liaison officer, they know how to react if faced with issues such as cyber-bullying.

Teaching and learning experiences

Leaders have worked with the whole school community to develop an aspirational curriculum that focuses well on fulfilling the school's vision for pupils to 'Learn, Grow and Achieve'. The school has developed useful long-term plans that map out areas

of learning and experience to ensure that the curriculum builds systematically on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills and meets their needs over time.

The curriculum is organised into well-balanced, cross-curricular topics around a central theme. The development of reading takes a central role and carefully selected texts form the basis of all topics. For example, teachers of younger pupils use a well-known story as a beneficial stimulus for developing reading, writing and creative work. This motivates pupils and captures their interest well. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum are less well developed.

The school keeps the curriculum under review and all staff have considerable input into its design and development. Leaders and staff provide useful opportunities for all pupils to voice their opinions about their curriculum. For example, teachers now plan for more use of the forest learning area following a request by pupils.

The school has invested thoughtfully in resources that support the development of pupils' social and emotional skills effectively. Teachers provide lessons on a wide range of areas including gender bias, the dangers of drugs and alcohol, and keeping safe online. For example, older pupils produce information leaflets on different types of drugs including those that are not socially acceptable.

Provision for the youngest pupils is based on a broad variety of enriching and well-coordinated learning and play experiences, which develop pupils' skills and independence effectively. Staff provide an effective range of stimulating activities indoors and utilise outdoor provision very well. This encourages pupils' enthusiasm, imagination and collaborative skills successfully. Additional enrichment experiences enhance the curriculum well. For example, representatives from a local university provide science, technology and engineering workshops for older pupils. In Year 5, pupils experienced a visit from a falconry expert with various birds of prey whilst studying the novel, *Sky Hawk*. As a result, they developed a deeper understanding of the text and were inspired to research more about birds of prey.

The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to engage with their local community. Older pupils visit a local care home to sing and spend time talking to residents and getting to know them. The School Council invited the local mayor to judge a competition. These activities successfully develop pupils' sense of belonging within their community. The school makes good use of off-site visits to enhance the curriculum and pupils' learning experiences. For example, younger pupils experienced a visit to a local farm park and older pupils attend an annual residential visit to Glan Llyn. There are suitable opportunities to develop the cultural, linguistic and diverse nature of Wales. Older pupils celebrate St. Dwynwen's Day and younger pupils learn about the story of St. David. However, overall, provision for pupils' Welsh language skills is less well developed.

Nearly all staff across the school, including the resource provision, develop strong working relationships with pupils, which foster a supportive and inclusive environment for learning. They share a calm and caring approach and, as a result, pupils feel confident to ask for support when needed. Staff manage pupils' behaviour very well in classes and around the school and provide highly successful support for pupils with emotional needs.

Teachers and support staff share clear learning objectives with pupils and provide helpful explanations to enable them to make effective progress. In most cases lessons move at a suitable pace and provide appropriate challenge for pupils. Many teachers recap on pupils' prior learning at the beginning of lessons well. This supports pupils learning effectively and helps them to remember key vocabulary and concepts.

Across the school, most staff use a range of beneficial approaches to engage pupils in their learning. They plan valuable opportunities for learning through practical activities, exploration and play. There is well-considered outdoor provision that enables pupils to develop their communication, social and physical skills well. All staff use games to enhance learning effectively, such as when they play charades with older pupils to support their understanding of imperative verbs and adverbs. They use resources that capture pupils' interest well. For example, in Year 4 pupils learn about the function of different teeth productively using virtual reality headsets.

Many staff routinely use effective questioning to challenge pupils' thinking and check for understanding. For example, they ask nursery pupils to justify their predictions about which minibeast is hiding behind a screen. This supports the development of their thinking skills and communication successfully. In the resource provision, thoughtful questioning enables pupils to develop their ideas and extend their conversations positively.

In almost all cases, teachers and support staff encourage pupils and praise them for their achievements. Many staff respond well to pupils to address misconceptions or remind them of learning intentions. In a minority of cases, feedback supports pupils to make simple improvements to their work. For example, in Year 2, many pupils make corrections to punctuation when prompted. However, overall feedback for pupils is not individualised enough to help them understand the next steps in their learning. Consequently, many pupils do not have a clear understanding of how to improve their work.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring and compassionate environment where everyone works together to provide highly effective support for pupils' physical and emotional well-being. The additional learning needs (ALN) co-ordinator, staff from the well-being team and Resource Provision provide valuable specialist support to pupils in these settings and in addition, guidance for all staff. This enables them to support learners successfully and to share good practice across the school. A dedicated team deliver bespoke, one-to-one support and respond effectively to the individual needs of pupils when needed. For example, to support pupils to overcome their anxieties, teaching assistants provide useful drawing and talking therapies. Older pupils receive beneficial support on how to develop and maintain friendships. The whole school community is underpinned by exceptional relationships. As a result, pupils feel secure, they settle into school life well and enjoy their learning.

Teachers plan activities that encourage pupils to reflect on their emotions and to self-regulate. For example, younger pupils use worry monsters to talk about their concerns and older pupils engage in regular mindfulness and breathing exercises. They appreciate this support and confidently explain how helpful it can be.

The management of pupils with more complex needs is exemplary. Senior leaders have developed a consistent whole-school approach towards behaviour management, especially for those pupils who have significant emotional needs. Staff work to agreed principles in a calm, compassionate manner, creating bespoke provision for different levels and types of emotional need. They successfully employ calming techniques and use equipment or space around the school to fulfil pupils' sensory needs.

The care and guidance provided for pupils learning English as an additional language (EAL) is very strong. Teachers skilfully ensure different levels of learning in lessons, enabling all pupils to access the curriculum. School staff and pupils effectively use a variety of apps to aid translation. They work to pupils' strengths, and provide visual cues, labelled images and videos and small group support to ensure that all pupils engage fully with their learning. The school develops considerable insight into the needs of pupils who have recently arrived from other countries and uses this well to tailor its support.

Nurture for pupils and families is particularly strong. The school deploys Family Link Workers to provide an extensive range of support. They offer courses for parents, different forms of counselling and advice on toileting and sleep. The school ensures a seamless approach to specific support for families, breaking down communication barriers and building up trusting and meaningful relationships. The school hosts a large number of Ukrainian pupils and facilitated the training for the cluster, provided by the International Rescue Committee. This helped pupils to settle into school and staff to understand the problems the children and families faced. As a result of this crucial work, attendance and outcomes for pupils are improved.

The school supports pupils with ALN in a highly effective way. Staff know their pupils very well. They develop effective provision maps to include the needs of all learners. The school places a strong emphasis on the consistent delivery of the agreed universal offer and supports its implementation through relevant training for staff. The school has well-developed systems to identify the needs of pupils and provides a wide range of beneficial interventions. Staff track pupil progress effectively and successfully evaluate the impact of interventions. As a result, most pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. The school has a good understanding of the requirements of the ALN Act and is making very good progress with its implementation. The management of the different forms of transition throughout the school is a strength and supports all pupils to feel valued, safe and secure.

The school successfully works with a wide range of agencies and professionals, such as educational psychologists, speech and language therapists and community paediatricians. In addition, staff benefit from worthwhile relationships within their local cluster of schools and research into effective ALN interventions with the local university.

The school supports physical well-being very well. Pupils enthusiastically play with 'loose parts' at lunchtime, supporting their collaborative play, creativity, imagination and emotional well-being. All pupils also have access to 'forest' lessons and a wide range of play equipment during playtimes.

The School Council has an active role in the school community. It wrote letters to the local MP and the Chief Constable of North Wales Police to highlight problems with parking and instigated a road safety poster competition to help address their concerns. School Council members attended a 'Pupil Voice Summit', taking part in workshops to discuss learner voice with pupils from other primary schools.

A range of experiences foster self-confidence and self-expression and encourage pupils to be creative. The school commissioned an artist to work with pupils with EAL and their families to produce a painting piece that celebrates and names the various languages spoken by pupils, bringing them all together, around the banner of the Welsh Dragon. Overall, the school's provision to support pupils spiritual, social and cultural development is effective.

The school promotes a culture of safety, empathy, care and support. There is an established system to report safeguarding concerns and the school makes timely referrals to outside agencies when appropriate. The school has a strong culture of safeguarding with clear arrangements for monitoring pupils' attendance and punctuality.

Leadership and management

Since her appointment, the headteacher has demonstrated strong, transformational leadership. She has worked conscientiously to deliver a clear strategic direction for the development of the school, to evaluate its work and plan and deliver improvements. There is a strong team ethos among all staff, who believe that ensuring the physical and emotional safety of all pupils is paramount. All leaders deliver robust but considerate leadership and, supported by staff, have created an inclusive culture where pupils feel safe and secure and have a strong sense of trust in others.

Leaders have high expectations of themselves, their staff and the pupils. Along with the whole school community they have thoughtfully refined the school's vision to reflect high aspirations for pupils, their families and the local community. Leaders and all staff have a firm understanding of the diverse needs of pupils and the local community. They are resilient and strive with great passion to meet these needs effectively. For example, the school's highly successful, tailored, nurture and resource provision enables pupils to gain confidence, build their self-esteem and integrate well into all aspects of school life. Overall, leaders establish and maintain a strong safeguarding culture at the school.

The school's evaluation and improvement processes are comprehensive and effective. Leaders and staff identify relevant priorities and take suitable actions to bring about improvements. They keep progress towards improvement priorities under continual review. The confidence and capacity within the school's staff to act instinctively to adapt plans and improve practice is particularly effective. Leaders ensure that all staff have beneficial opportunities to participate in professional learning, linked to the priorities in the school development plan and to individual research, for example by developing robust interventions and approaches to support pupils with ALN and by strengthening the school's provision to improve pupils' outdoor learning experiences.

Leaders ensure that the school makes effective progress in addressing national priorities. They have designed and are well on their way to delivering their understanding of the Curriculum for Wales. Work to address ALN reform is highly successful and there is a sharp focus on improving pupils' literacy and communication skills. Leaders are highly committed to tackling poverty in the local community. They have worked thoughtfully to audit school provision and identify and effectively address areas for improvement. As a result of changes made to school practice, the school meets the needs of the community very well. Work to ensure that pupils have regular and suitable opportunities to develop their Welsh language skills, however, is less well developed.

Leaders and staff enjoy close and effective working partnerships with parents. Communication between home and school is exceedingly effective. All leaders are highly visible and on hand to welcome pupils and talk to parents at the beginning of the school day. Parents trust that the school is doing the right thing for pupils and always acts in their best interests. Specialist agencies visit the school regularly to provide valuable advice and support to parents, for instance, play therapists work alongside parents so they can help their children to develop their thoughts and feelings through play activities at home. All staff support parents sensitively, such as when helping parents to complete administrative tasks and to better understand how to support their children's behaviour and academic progress.

Governors support the school positively. For instance, when the building needed essential maintenance and additional reading resources were required to support pupils' learning, they ensured that appropriate funding was available. Governors know the school and the community it serves well. They understand the school's improvement priorities and the reasons that rest behind them. They support leaders to implement and monitor improvement work appropriately by visiting the school to see developments at first hand. Governors make appropriate arrangements for healthy eating and drinking.

School leaders use grant funding, wisely and effectively. They are proactive and ensure that all pupils who require bespoke interventions to improve their learning, well-being and emotional health can access the support they need. For instance, leaders provide support for pupils to attend swimming lessons and school visits, and to learn to play a musical instrument. Resources to support mindfulness across the school have impacted positively on pupil behaviour and in particular their readiness to learn. Leaders and teachers track individuals and groups thoroughly to ensure that any interventions funded by grants support pupils to thrive and achieve.

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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Publication date: 07/08/2023