



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

**A report on**

**St Brigid's School**

**Plas Yn Green  
Mold Road  
Denbigh  
Sir Ddinbych  
LL16 4BH**

**Date of inspection: February 2024**

**by**

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

## About St Brigid's School

Name of provider	St Brigid's School
Local authority	Denbighshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	All age schools
Religious character	School with a Catholic ethos
Number of pupils on roll	471
Pupils of statutory school age	389
Number in nursery classes	12
Number in sixth form	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 All age schools is 21.6%)	10.2%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in All age schools is 11.0%)	7.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	4.6%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	4.1%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/06/2020
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/05/2016
Start date of inspection	26/02/2024

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](https://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

Many pupils at St Brigid's School make secure progress in learning and skills, particularly in their oracy. Most pupils develop valuable personal qualities over time and grow into conscientious, well-mannered and sociable individuals. They are proud of the school's Catholic ethos and the 'Brigidine' values it promotes. The respectful and polite nature of most pupils is a notable feature of the school.

Overall, staff and pupils enjoy strong and productive working relationships and this creates a happy learning environment. Many teachers prepare their lessons carefully to ensure that pupils acquire knowledge and skills through interesting and engaging learning experiences. However, in a few cases, leaders and teachers do not plan carefully enough to ensure that pupils make enough progress in skills, particularly numeracy, Welsh language and digital skills. Provision for personal and social education in the lower and middle schools is well planned but there are fewer opportunities for pupils to build on their knowledge and understanding of important issues in the upper school and in the sixth form.

Care and support for all pupils, particularly the vulnerable and those with additional learning needs, is a particular strength of the school. Leaders and staff have cultivated a close, nurturing bond with their pupils over time. Together, they profess the school's strong Catholic and 'Brigidine' values and demonstrate a strong sense of mutual respect and appreciation.

The headteacher is a motivating leader who works tirelessly to inspire staff and pupils and ensure that the school continues to improve, despite significant financial challenges and the poor state of the premises. She has a well-defined vision that is shared by most of the staff. Although leaders regularly monitor the quality of the school's work, evaluations do not focus enough on the impact of provision on pupils' learning. Governors support the school but, together with senior leaders, do not always consider the needs of current pupils when planning the curriculum for the upper school.

## Recommendations

- R1 Improve the planning for the progressive development of pupils' skills, including their Welsh language skills, so that the provision meets the needs of all pupils
- R2 Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning processes to ensure that monitoring activities focus on the impact of provision on pupils' learning
- R3 Ensure that strategic decisions reflect the current and future needs of the school and work with the local authority to address the deficit budget

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

### Learning

On entry, a minority of pupils start school with literacy and numeracy skills below those expected for their age. As they move up the school, many pupils including those eligible for free school meals make good progress overall. Most pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), make strong progress in personal, social and communication skills against their individual targets. Across the school, many pupils make secure progress in their learning and subject knowledge. They recall prior learning well and apply this suitably to new or unfamiliar contexts. Generally, many pupils make at least suitable, age-appropriate progress in literacy and numeracy skills. A few pupils do not make enough progress in learning and skills, particularly the more able. This is normally due to shortcomings in teachers' planning.

Over time, most pupils develop strong oracy skills. This is a strength of the school. Most pupils listen attentively to teacher instruction and presentation. Most of the youngest pupils in the lower school speak clearly and start to acquire a growing vocabulary, including specialist and technical terminology. For example, Year 1 and 2 pupils develop their communication skills effectively when conducting an online interview with the curator of the national museum about the history of the development of toys. Many pupils' speaking skills develop well as they get older. Middle school pupils converse with their peers confidently and wait their turn patiently before giving their opinions in a careful, considered manner. Many secondary aged pupils consolidate and expand on the strong speaking and listening skills they have developed earlier on. They speak eloquently with adults and visitors and often provide extended and thoughtful responses to their teachers' questions. When asked to elaborate on their answers, many are articulate and offer detailed responses using sophisticated language and technical terminology. Older pupils are broadly keen to take part in class discussions and work well in pairs or small groups.

Overall, many pupils develop secure reading skills over time. Many pupils, including those with weaker skills enjoy reading aloud. The youngest pupils use their knowledge of phonics successfully when they start to read short simple words and use illustrations in books to help them understand the story. They develop a secure understanding that texts carry meaning from an early age. The reading skills of pupils in Years 4-6 are developing particularly well. Many use a range of strategies to make meaning from words and sentences, including knowledge of phonics, text organisation and prior knowledge of context. Nearly all can find information and ideas from web pages confidently, using different search methods, considering which are the most efficient. More able pupils distinguish between facts, theories and opinions and can compare the viewpoint of different writers on the same topic. As they move up the school, most pupils develop secure retrieval skills. They locate facts, highlight

important information accurately and interpret this well. Where opportunities arise, many pupils synthesise information from a range of texts effectively. For example, in history they evaluate a variety of sources effectively when analysing the main factors that caused the First World War. In English lessons, more able pupils respond well to challenging texts; they analyse language, character descriptions and emerging themes perceptively. However, a few older pupils do not analyse literary texts in sufficient depth. They produce superficial responses such as recounting the plot rather than discussing characters or ideas.

Broadly, many pupils develop secure and purposeful writing skills over time, including developing their ability to write independently and with increasing length. Most make strong development in fine motor skills over time and produce handwriting that is clear and legible, generally taking great pride in the presentation of their work. Many younger pupils write legibly and use a suitable range of genre to write for different purposes. For example, many Year 1 and Year 2 pupils write extended sentences using basic persuasive language techniques effectively for example, to convince the headteacher that having a garden pond would be beneficial. As they get older, many pupils convey their thoughts and ideas clearly in more extended pieces of writing, using more adventurous vocabulary. Pupils with weaker literacy skills also develop their writing to a reasonable length. Many pupils in the upper school write using a range of stylistic techniques, adapting their language suitably to suit the audience. They re-draft elements of their writing when asked to do so and improve its quality. The majority of older pupils write perceptively about a range of literature, incorporating relevant quotations into their work to support their assertions. A few pupils make regular spelling and punctuation errors, particularly of more complex words. These pupils do not always structure their writing coherently, there are gaps and unfinished tasks in their exercise books or their written responses are too brief.

Overall, many pupils make at least suitable progress in numeracy skills over time. Pupils in the lower school generally develop secure, early mathematical understanding and a good grasp of number. As they get older, the majority of pupils are able to perform age-appropriate calculations with the four rules of number. They generally select and use appropriate standard units to estimate and measure length, mass and capacity. When they move up to middle school, many develop a sound knowledge base of mathematic vocabulary to use, such as 'denominator' and 'numerator' for comparing and ordering fractions. Many pupils calculate mean values for sets of data successfully. Many older pupils develop suitable numerical skills in mathematics lessons. For example, they apply their skills suitably to formulate quadratic graphs and solve quadratic equations. Broadly, pupils apply their numeracy skills well in a few relevant subjects other than mathematics. For example, in science, many pupils plot and draw accurate graphs and interpret them correctly and successfully solve speed calculations and manipulate equations when dealing with Newton's second law of motion. However, pupils do not develop their numeracy skills to the same degree in all relevant subjects across the curriculum.

Across the curriculum, many pupils use basic digital skills only, such as researching the internet and presenting information in different ways. For example, pupils in middle school develop their digital skills effectively by learning how to use co-ordinates on digital maps and produce PowerPoint presentations summarising their research on Aneurin Bevan. On a few beneficial occasions, there are opportunities

for pupils to develop more advanced skills, skills such as when lower school pupils draw a simple digital character, animate it and add voice and sound to indicate mood.

Overall, pupils make suitable initial development in basic Welsh language skills but do not make enough progress higher up the school. The youngest pupils have a particularly positive and enthusiastic attitude to learning and speaking Welsh. Nearly all of the youngest pupils respond appropriately to their teachers' commands in Welsh and answer simple questions correctly. They develop a secure, basic vocabulary which enables them to discuss day to day topics such as the weather. As they move up to middle school, most pupils show good recall of previously learnt language and extend their vocabulary competently. However, the majority of pupils in the upper school lack confidence to speak Welsh in class. They produce brief and basic oral answers although when they read aloud they have broadly accurate pronunciation and show a secure understanding of what they are reading. A very few more able pupils use a broad range of tenses and sophisticated language to speak independently and spontaneously. Many older pupils have appropriate recall of previous work and a suitable range of vocabulary and understanding of grammar rules to enable them to read basic written texts and gather information from these. Overall, many pupils across the school write age-appropriate basic sentences in the present and past tenses accurately, but too often with support from vocabulary lists and sentence builders.

Many pupils make suitable progress in developing their physical skills and enjoy taking part in physical activity. Pupils in the sixth form who study photography as part of their art and design course exhibit exceptional creative skills when manipulating images and colour following the style of the Russian photographer Elizaveta Porodina or when exploring visual exaggeration by using a fisheye lens. Pupils develop beneficial independent problem-solving or thinking skills in a minority of learning areas and subjects.

Nearly all sixth form pupils are polite and conscientious young adults who are excellent role models for the younger pupils. They are passionate supporters of and advocates for their school. In lessons, nearly all engage well with their learning and collaborate well with their peers. Many recall prior learning well and explain it clearly. Many are articulate and communicate skilfully in speech and writing. They develop extended responses using sophisticated vocabulary. For example, they quote and comment on an advert they heard on the radio and how this impacted on them. In a few subjects, sixth form pupils read highly complex texts and make sense of them

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Nearly all pupils enjoy their time at St Brigid's School. Most feel safe and free from bullying. If they do have a concern, they know who to turn to when they need help. Where pupils feel that they experience bullying, most say it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Nearly all primary aged pupils and most secondary aged pupils behave well in lessons and at lunchtimes and break times. They have a strong understanding of the school rules, rewards and sanctions. However, on occasions, a very few pupils do not behave well enough and a few upper school pupils feel that the rewards system does not meet their needs.

Nearly all pupils are exceptionally polite and respectful to staff, peers and visitors. Many pupils embrace the 'Brigidine' values of the school and are developing well as 'knowledge seekers' and 'truth tellers'. For example, they talk about honesty, kindness, encouragement and enthusiasm. Most pupils display empathy and compassion for others, reflecting the school's Catholic values and recognising the importance of their rights, and those of others. Across the school, pupils have strong working relationships with adults and with each other. There are high levels of mutual respect and trust across the school community This is a notable feature.

Many pupils, including vulnerable pupils and those with ALN, benefit from taking on leadership roles that allow them to influence the work of the school. Many pupils say that the school considers their views when making decisions that affect them. For example, they describe improvements in arrangements for lunch time and the choice of clubs. Members of the school's 'Communications Team' function as a senior school council and work closely with their peers to consider how they can further improve their school. For example, they have been influential in shaping the new anti-bullying policy.

Many pupils benefit from the extra-curricular activities and clubs they attend and develop their sporting, artistic and musical skills. Many upper school and sixth form pupils benefit from their membership of the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), which helps develop leadership, self-discipline and confidence. However, a minority of pupils say that the choice of clubs available is limited.

Most pupils arrive punctually to their sessions, settle quickly to work and have a positive attitude to their learning. Most work productively in small groups or pairs, support one another to take responsibility for their own learning. They enjoy taking part in discussions and learning activities. Many persevere and concentrate well in tasks. In a minority of cases, pupils display substantial resilience and an ability to work independently without resorting to support from teachers. In a few instances, pupils find difficulty keeping focus throughout the lesson and distract others.

Between the academic years 2018-2019 and 2022-2023, the school's rate of attendance fell by a smaller amount than seen nationally. Last year it was slightly below that of similar schools. The rate of persistent absence is also slightly below national averages. The attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. Unverified attendance data for this year shows an increase compared with the same time last year.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

Most staff create and maintain positive working relationships with pupils. This is a notable feature of the school's provision. Most teachers encourage and motivate pupils well through individual attention and judicious praise. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and engagement, demonstrate effective classroom management and promote a calm, orderly and respectful learning environment. These positive features support pupils' attitudes to learning effectively.

Many teachers demonstrate sound subject knowledge and model language appropriately. They plan their sessions effectively, providing pupils with engaging resources and suitable learning experiences despite the challenges posed by the

size and condition of some classrooms. Foundation learning principles are well integrated in the teaching in the lower school. In the best examples, staff creatively identify 'teachable moments' as pupils explore and play. In the many sessions across the school, teachers provide clear instruction at the start, and introduce tasks in a manner that engages pupils well. They make skilful use of a variety of teaching methods to keep pupils focused and ensure that there is a suitable pace to the learning. However, in a few sessions, teachers provide low level tasks that do not challenge pupils sufficiently or the pace of learning is too slow. In these sessions, the teachers' instructions are lengthy and over prescriptive and, as a result, pupils are passive and become restless or disengaged.

Many teachers have high expectations of pupils. Overall, they use a variety of effective questioning techniques and encourage pupils to extend their responses, or to reframe answers. In the most effective cases, they ask probing questions, which challenge pupils to deepen their understanding. They check that pupils have understood instructions prior to pupils starting a task. However, when the questioning techniques of the teacher are narrow, pupils provide brief, undeveloped verbal responses. In addition, on a few occasions in the upper school, teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to listen to each other's ideas and discuss. This hampers the development of pupils' oracy and independence.

The majority of teachers adapt their approaches to support the learning of lower ability pupils suitably by providing further guidance and tailored support. A minority of teachers do not consider carefully enough the needs of all pupils, which means that more able and talented pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their skills sufficiently and less able pupils find the work too challenging, at times.

In a few sessions, where teaching has the strongest impact on progress, teachers demonstrate a passion for their subject and communicate with a sense of enthusiasm that inspires pupils. They ensure that activities meet the needs of pupils. For example, they use subtle techniques to adapt the tasks for pupils working at different levels. In a few cases, teachers allow sufficient and beneficial thinking time before pupils respond to an enquiry. This enables pupils to produce thoughtful, well-considered responses. These teachers probe pupils' thinking and encourage them to think more deeply about the topic and broaden their ideas.

Across the school, teachers provide pupils with suitable verbal feedback. Most circulate the class beneficially during sessions, providing pupils with appropriate encouragement and assistance. The majority of teachers provide valuable written feedback. In the strongest examples, pupils enrich the content and quality of their work in light of this feedback. In a minority of cases where written feedback is less useful, pupils continue to repeat common punctuation and spelling errors, and do not progress as they receive insufficient advice about developing their work further.

Teachers provide informative reports to parents. The reports are written in a bespoke manner and include useful next steps on how pupils can make further progress. All parents also receive useful half-termly reports on pupils' attendance.

The school has a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. In the sixth form, the range of subjects pupils study is enhanced through consortium arrangements with other local providers. In a few instances, senior leaders have developed the curriculum in



response to pupils' needs, such as by increasing the range of vocational courses in the upper school and sixth form by introducing public services and home cooking. However, overall, strategic planning for the curriculum does not take enough account of pupils' needs at Key Stage 4.

Leaders and teachers have developed the school's Curriculum for Wales over several years, trialling and adapting different approaches. Leaders embrace the all-age nature of the school and ensure that approaches to curriculum design and pedagogy in the lower school influence beneficially practice in the middle and upper phases. In a minority of subjects, specialist teachers regularly take lessons across the whole school. In general, the school's four-phase structure of lower, middle, upper and sixth form promotes progression in learning well. From nursery to Year 6, learning is integrated within broad themes and pupils undertake a carousel of well-planned activities to develop their skills, teamwork and independence. In Years 7 and 8, teachers plan 'rich tasks' that develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills in authentic contexts, although the quality and impact of these is variable.

The school's personal and social education (PSE) programme is taught in discrete sessions in the lower and middle school which help pupils develop their personal and social skills cumulatively. In the upper school and sixth form, PSE is taught through form time and 'drop-down days'. Consequently, older pupils have less time to develop these skills and planning for the programme is too vague.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development particularly effectively. Its religious character and Catholic values are reflected well in the 'Brigidine Learner Profile', daily prayers and the fact that nearly all pupils study a qualification in religious studies. The school promotes pupils' social and cultural development appropriately across the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities, such as an astronomy club. However, there are too few opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to learn about diversity, including LGBTQ+, and the history and culture of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

In general, pupils make secure progress in developing their literacy, numeracy and digital skills from their starting points. Leaders have identified a few clear priorities for developing these skills further across the curriculum. They have provided helpful professional learning for staff, and teachers are implementing suitable strategies in relevant subjects to improve pupils' skills, although it is too early to evaluate the impact of this work fully. In addition, while teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to apply and practise literacy, numeracy and digital skills in relevant subjects, these are sometimes at a basic level and do not help pupils develop advanced skills well enough. Overall, planning strategically for the progressive development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills is at an early stage.

There are suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about Welsh culture and heritage through the curriculum and events such as eisteddfodau, local visits and online meetings with staff from St Fagan's, the Museum of Welsh Life. Nevertheless, provision for progressively developing pupils' Welsh language skills in the middle and upper school is underdeveloped and leaders' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough.

Staff prepare pupils well for transitions into Key Stage 4, the sixth form and beyond. Although aspects of the curriculum, such as information technology and physical education, are hampered by a lack of resources, teachers make good use of outdoor facilities in foundation learning. For older pupils, they organise valuable educational learning in the school's woodland area and to Denbigh town and castle. In addition, pupils' experiences are enhanced by the school's Combined Cadet Force, which offers a beneficial and well-attended Duke of Edinburgh programme.

### **Care, support and guidance**

The school provides strong support for all pupils in developing their social and emotional skills. Through its caring ethos, staff provide effective nurture for vulnerable learners and the early identification of needs. The school works well with external agencies to develop a range of helpful interventions and support. The ALN team is highly effective in developing provision with staff to meet the needs of individual pupils. There are robust processes in place, including regular liaison with families, specialist external agencies and settings to help meet pupils' individual needs well. Internally, the school's Rainbow Room and Hafan area enable pupils to receive intervention and support for their learning, well-being and to address their physical needs.

An outstanding feature of St. Brigid's is the strong sense of morality and kindness, which permeates its work. The school encourages pupils to consider their community through its charitable work, such as giving during 'reverse Advent' and sharing pre-owned uniform. In addition, the school participates at local church events, for example during the period of Lent. The school's strong values engender a sense of belonging among pupils. As a result, nearly all pupils talk confidently and knowledgeably about their Brigidine heritage and values. Here, the school strives to develop its pupils to become 'truth tellers', 'game changers', 'knowledge seekers' and 'joy bringers' and encourages belonging within the school as a community. This understanding of community extends into the locality as pupils learn about the heritage of Denbigh and consider what they can do to protect the environmental future of their town. This important work helps pupils to understand their sense of place in Wales, while older pupils refine their understanding of themselves as global citizens, by visiting places further afield, such as Barcelona. However, visits to assist pupils in promoting an understanding of their identity, particularly out in the locality, are inconsistent in the upper school.

Staff provide suitable opportunities for pupils to play an active role in the continual development of their school. There are clear structures to capture pupils' views in determining its direction in a few areas through the work of the school Communications Team. These pupils work with leaders and their peers to review important policies and procedures, such as the anti-bullying policy. However, the influence of pupil voice on other important aspects is at an early stage.

Staff encourage pupils to take part in productions and team sport competitions and perform in assemblies to their peers. The school provides some extra-curricular activities to encourage pupils to develop interests and skills, such as the pantomime and the chess club. However, the range of extra-curricular activities on offer does not appeal to all pupils.

Staff across the lower, middle and upper schools and sixth form work effectively together as a school community and share their knowledge of pupils. As a result, staff and pupils know each other well and show mutual respect to each other. Cross-school working is enhanced through the frequent opportunities for older pupils to work with younger pupils, which reinforces the school as a familial learning community. For example, older pupils listen to younger pupils read and have opportunities to teach in sessions under the supervision of a teacher. The school ensures there is suitable advice and guidance for education and career pathways to ensure that pupils make informed choices for their next stage, including when they leave school.

The school promotes a strong culture of safeguarding. There are robust policies and procedures in place and staff have regular training to support them in their roles. As a result, staff understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher is a passionate, highly motivated and ambitious leader. In a short time, she has succeeded in dealing with complex legacy issues and shown resilience and determination to drive the school forward. Since her appointment, she has invested a considerable amount of time, energy and resource into developing the school as a learning organisation in which many staff want to continuously improve.

The headteacher has developed a clear vision together with the school community. This encourages all 'To inspire and be inspired' through being 'knowledge seekers, truth tellers, joy bringers and game changers'. This vision is communicated effectively and is embraced by nearly all stakeholders. She places trust in the senior leadership team who, overall, support her well. They have worked successfully to manage changes and respond to challenges. After a recent restructure, senior leaders' responsibilities are delegated sensibly, and the purpose of each role is defined clearly.

The deputy headteacher and headteacher hold other leaders to account appropriately. Line management arrangements are clear and middle leaders benefit from regular discussions about their work. These discussions always focus on progress against improvement plans and leaders follow up on agreed actions suitably. Leaders deal robustly and sensitively with staff who underperform by providing suitable support and guidance.

The school has appropriate procedures for managing staff performance, including for support staff. This is underpinned by appropriate professional learning opportunities that align suitably with school priorities. Most staff participate in a comprehensive range of worthwhile professional learning activities. Leaders place an emphasis on ensuring tailored training for individual members of staff to help them develop professionally, where the main focus is on developing teaching and learning. Staff also undertake useful enquiry-based research to develop their teaching. Staff across the school are beginning to collaborate with each other and with other schools to share good practice. The school also provides beneficial opportunities for staff to develop leadership skills.

Leaders have taken suitable steps to improve parental engagement, for example they communicate regularly through a 'parent app', social media and newsletters. This keeps parents and carers updated about the work of the school and provides useful information regarding the next steps in their child's education.

Recent changes to the self-evaluation processes have resulted in a better understanding by leaders about the schools' strengths and areas for improvement. The headteacher has a clear overview and understanding of these. Leaders, staff and governors play an increasing role in the quality assurance and evaluation of provision, and to a lesser extent about pupils' learning. Recently, leaders have begun to gather a greater range of first-hand evidence, such as from useful learning walks, book scrutiny, lesson observations and the gathering of pupil and other stakeholder views. Overall, self-evaluation activities predominately focus on gathering evidence on the quality of provision, and not enough on its impact on learning. The ability of leaders and teachers to evaluate provision and learning effectively is at an early stage of development and the related guidance and support provided for them is generally limiting.

Leaders are beginning to use self-evaluation findings, together with other information, to devise relevant priorities and actions for improvement. There is an appropriate coherence between the priorities set within the current school development plan and faculty or school phase action plans. This means that, generally, middle leaders and teachers have a worthwhile working knowledge of their contribution to meeting the priorities. Most leaders monitor and evaluate progress against priorities appropriately and adapt approaches where necessary.

Overall, the school is beginning to make sound improvements in key areas. These are having a positive impact on pupil well-being, aspects of teaching, provision for ALN pupils and improving quality assurance processes. However, it has not had sufficient impact on some other important areas, such as the development of pupils' Welsh language skills or planning for progression of pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

In general, leaders address national priorities suitably. They arrange beneficial opportunities for pupils that help to tackle the impact of poverty on learning. For example, they use part of the pupil development grant to fund supplementary workshops and enriching learning experiences. Leaders ensure that pupils and their families benefit from access to affordable school uniform. The Curriculum for Wales principles form the foundation of the whole-school vision and senior leaders support staff in the planning and implementing the curriculum appropriately.

Governors have a sound working knowledge of the school and gain first-hand insights into the provision and standards. They have a good depth of understanding about the strengths and the areas for improvement and have a valuable input into the strategic direction of the school, such as supporting and developing the school's development plan. They fulfil their statutory duties appropriately, such as to promote pupils' healthy eating and drinking. They contribute to ensuring a strong culture of safeguarding and have received the appropriate training. Historically, a few decisions by leaders, including the governors, regarding curriculum choices and staffing have not always considered the long-term impact on the school's resources and needs well enough.

The school is in a precarious financial situation where the budget deficit is large and forecast to increase. It has an agreed licenced deficit plan with the local authority. The school and local authority monitor spending closely to adhere to the terms of the licence. Grant expenditure is appropriate. The pupil development grant is used to ensure that pupils from low-income households are not at a disadvantage and make suitable progress from their starting points.

The buildings, especially the mobile classrooms, are in a poor state of repair. The school is over-subscribed with many pupils on waiting lists for admission. Currently, classrooms are too small and restrict the school's capacity to increase pupil numbers.

## 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 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 and middle leaders (where appropriate) 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, where appropriate
- visit a broad sample of lessons, 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](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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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