



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Alexandra School
Park Avenue
Wrexham
Clwyd
LL12 7AZ**

Date of inspection: February 2012

by

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



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW

or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.uk

© Crown Copyright 2012: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Context

The school serves a community in the centre of Wrexham. Most of the pupils are drawn from the Caia Park housing estate.

The school educates pupils between the ages of three and 11. There are currently 221 pupils on roll in the mainstream school. These include 38 children who attend the nursery on a part-time basis.

The school also has an additional 60 pupils in learning resource bases for pupils with additional learning needs (the units). These include three classes for Foundation Phase pupils within the Wrexham Assessment Centre and two additional units for three to seven-year-olds and seven to 11-year-olds with a range of learning difficulties. The numbers attending the units vary during the year. The extent of the resourced provision at the school has increased significantly since the school was last inspected. In total, 86 pupils (31%) are on the school's additional learning needs register, 27 of whom have a statement of special educational needs.

The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds for whom English is the main language. Approximately 5% of pupils are from minority ethnic families. A small percentage of these pupils speak English as an additional language. Almost 49% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is significantly above the national and local authority average. The school describes the community as largely socially disadvantaged.

The present school was built in 2000. The individual school budget per pupil for Alexandra School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £5,009 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Wrexham is £8,569 and the minimum is £2,903. Alexandra C.P. School is seventh out of the 60 primary schools in Wrexham in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

The school's current performance	Good
The school's prospects for improvement	Excellent

Current performance

The current performance of the school is good because:

- the standards achieved by pupils compare well with those of other, similar schools;
- pupils make good progress in acquiring the skills of reading and writing for a range of purposes;
- it is a very inclusive community where pupils show respect, care and concern for others;
- it provides a wide range of challenging and interesting learning experiences for pupils of all abilities; and
- the overall quality of teaching across the school is good.

Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are excellent because:

- the school has a very clear vision and an established culture that strives for improvement;
- the headteacher and senior management team provide very effective leadership and have high expectations;
- the governing body has a good understanding of its role and of how the school performs;
- the school's self-evaluation arrangements are exemplary and cover all aspects of the school's work; and
- information from self-evaluation is used very effectively to develop and prioritise improvement plans with a clear focus on improving standards of teaching and learning.

Recommendations

In order to improve the school needs to:

- R1 develop the ability of older pupils to apply their numeracy skills to undertake investigations;
- R2 ensure that pupils in the Foundation Phase are given sufficient opportunities to choose and pursue their own activities independently; and
- R3 develop the governing body's role in supporting the school effectively as a critical friend.

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how the school is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the school to prepare a written case study, describing the excellent practice identified during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

In key stage 1 and key stage 2, the pupils' performance shows a clear upward trend over recent years. When the performance of these pupils in 2011 is compared to pupils in other, similar schools, they place the school in the highest 25% of such schools. The proportion of more able pupils in the mainstream class attaining a higher than expected level was broadly similar to the average for its family in key stage 1 and above this average for key stage 2.

Pupils in the assessment centre and units make good progress relative to their ability and achieve well against the targets set for them in their individual education plans. Many make steady progress in developing their skills of reading and writing. Most of these pupils express themselves to the best of their ability. With support, a few listen well and are able to follow instructions accurately.

There is no consistent pattern to the relative performance of boys and girls. However, when the attainment of those pupils with additional learning needs is included, then overall performance reflects the national picture, whereby boys achieve less well than girls. Generally, pupils who are entitled to free school meals enter the school with lower than average ability, but over time these pupils make good progress, so that by the end of key stage 2 almost all achieve the level expected of them.

Most pupils have good speaking and listening skills. They make good progress in acquiring the skills of reading and writing for a range of purposes, enabling them to build on their previous learning and to acquire new knowledge and skills. The progress that most make in using skills in information and communication technology is excellent. Most pupils' attitudes to learning Welsh are positive and they make good progress in gaining skills in the language.

Wellbeing: Excellent

Overall, behaviour is very good and pupils feel safe in school. They are confident that any concerns are treated seriously and acted upon quickly and fairly. They are proud to be members of the school community and this contributes very positively to the standards they achieve. They understand very well the need to eat healthily and take exercise. Nearly all pupils are very courteous and polite and develop excellent relationships with each other and with adults. They are very well motivated, enjoy school and co-operate very well. Attendance is improving every year and the school is in the upper 25% when compared to similar schools across Wales. Almost all pupils arrive on time and both attendance and punctuality are very effectively monitored. In the assessment centre and units, pupils' ability to participate in lessons develops very well and many are beginning to focus effectively on tasks with interest and enjoyment.

Members of the School Council are enthusiastic and understand their role. They consult well with fellow pupils and influence developments significantly. Improvements such as privilege time, lunch menus and physical changes to the building have been incorporated into school improvement plans and benefit all pupils. The School Council has managed a limited budget very effectively.

The school is a very inclusive community where pupils show respect, care and concern for others. Nearly all pupils show empathy, tolerance and understanding for each other and contribute very successfully to the integration and wellbeing of learners from the units. Many pupils work well when solving problems and have good understanding of how they improve their work. Most can work well independently or in a group.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
---	-------------

Learning experiences: Good

The school provides a wide range of challenging and interesting learning experiences for pupils of all abilities. Teachers within the Foundation Phase provide a good range of experiences to support pupils' development. However, plans do not give pupils enough opportunities to initiate and pursue their own activities independently. In key stage 2, teachers' planning ensures that the curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. Plans build systematically on pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils are offered a good range of visits locally and further afield, including residential visits to Snowdonia and London. The curriculum in both the assessment centre and the units provides breadth and stimulating learning opportunities.

Arrangements for developing pupils' skills are a strength of the school. Good planning is in place for developing skills in writing, numeracy and information and technology, while skills relating to specific subjects are developed progressively. Teaching staff use Welsh regularly and effectively in the classroom and around the school. Pupils have many interesting opportunities to learn about their locality and also about Wales, its history and culture.

Provision for pupils' education for sustainable development and global citizenship is good and permeates many areas of the curriculum. Other cultures are celebrated through such themes as 'Australia'. There is an enthusiastic eco committee and many opportunities for recycling. The school has achieved the Eco Schools bronze award. Interesting themes provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to consider their place in the world. For example, a 'Money Week' encourages pupils to think about wealth and poverty. There are a good number of after-school activities that enrich pupils' experiences.

Teaching: Good

Teaching within the assessment centre and units is consistently good. Teachers make very effective use of individualised programmes and use an extensive range of specialised teaching strategies to meet the needs of all pupils. Very detailed assessments are completed for each pupil in order to support the identification of their future needs.

The overall quality of teaching in the mainstream classes is good. Lessons are well paced, and have clear learning intentions and success criteria. They provide opportunities for pupils to develop a range of skills and enable pupils to make good progress. Lessons are well planned and teachers make effective use of teaching assistants. Adults are good language role models and have very positive relationships with pupils.

Staff work well with other local schools to moderate children's work accurately. Pupil progress is tracked well and this contributes effectively to planning and teaching. A variety of strategies are used very well across the school to enhance pupil involvement and progress in lessons. Effective oral and written feedback informs pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Pupil involvement in their own assessment and target setting is a good feature of the school. Reports to parents are clear and they are well informed about their children's achievements and progress.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The wellbeing and care of pupils are a high priority. The arrangements to co-ordinate the school's work are based on a very good understanding of the area it serves and its families. They are highly effective in overcoming barriers to pupils' progress. The school has very strong and supportive links with a number of specialist services and outside agencies. These links ensure high quality support and guidance to pupils and parents. The provision for healthy living and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school promotes values and principles very well and this is reflected in the respect pupils have for each other and adults. Educational visits make a valuable contribution to pupils' cultural and wider development. There are very effective arrangements in place for promoting good behaviour and attendance.

The support and care provided for pupils in the assessment centre and units is consistently good. Extensive use is made of specialist services to enable the school to provide very effectively for pupils' specific needs. Arrangements for the use and regular review of individual education plans are very effective. Pupils' progress against their individual targets is monitored very effectively and parents are kept fully informed. Pupils in these classes integrate regularly with pupils in the mainstream classes, for example during morning service, and all pupils benefit from these arrangements.

The school has procedures and an appropriate policy for safeguarding.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is very good and enables these pupils to do well. Staff identify pupils learning difficulties early and provide pupils with appropriate, effective and timely support. Their progress is assessed regularly and the information is used very effectively to provide further support as needed. The support for pupils is managed and co-ordinated efficiently. Parents are well informed and effectively involved in setting and reviewing their child's education plans.

Learning environment: Good

The school is an inclusive community in which all pupils are valued equally. All adults collaborate effectively to create a warm and supportive atmosphere. There are equal opportunities for all. Pupils are friendly and polite and instances of undesirable behaviour are very rare. Pupils gain from their roles as school councillors, eco councillors and Helpwyr Heddiw.

The modern school building is used well. Classrooms are spacious and are decorated with good quality displays that promote pupils' learning effectively. The building and grounds are well maintained. Teachers and pupils have easy access to a good range of high quality resources; the provision for information and communication technology is particularly good. There are spacious grassed and hard-surface play areas, and stimulating outdoor learning areas that impact positively on the standards pupils achieve.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Excellent
--	------------------

Leadership: Excellent

The school has a very clear vision and an established culture that strives for improvement. It has developed an innovative management structure where a senior teacher, without responsibility for a class, is responsible for wellbeing and basic skills. This is highly effective in ensuring an appropriate emphasis on these priorities. The headteacher and senior management team provide very effective leadership and have high expectations of all pupils and staff. Well planned staff meetings focus on the school's priorities for development. These help staff to develop a clear, shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to the school's strategies and plans. Data is analysed very well and used effectively to monitor performance across the school. Comprehensive performance management procedures are in place for the teaching and support staff. Targets for individual members of staff relate directly to whole-school improvement priorities and individual development needs. These procedures support the effective delivery of the school's development plans. They also contribute significantly to the professional development of staff and the school has achieved an Investors in People Gold Award.

The governing body has a good understanding of its role and of how the school performs. It analyses relevant data appropriately and is aware of the issues arising from it. Members of the governing body develop expertise in subjects by meeting with subject leaders to agree the direction for school improvement. This raises their awareness of standards and helps them to understand organisational issues. It also helps to develop their ability to provide appropriate challenge to the school.

School development planning takes account of local and national priorities and incorporates them in appropriate strategies. National initiatives such as the Literacy Strategy, Basic Skills Strategy and Assessment for Learning are very effectively embedded in the school's day to day activities.

Improving quality: Excellent

The school's self-evaluation arrangements are exemplary and cover nearly all aspects of the school's work. Subject leaders provide thorough evaluations based on a wide range of first-hand evidence. This includes effective analysis of performance data, scrutiny of pupils' work, scrutiny of planning and session observations. These contributions, and their impact on the quality of the school's self-evaluation arrangements, are sector-leading. They help to ensure that the school identifies relevant trends and progress over time very effectively and that it monitors and evaluates pupils' learning robustly and accurately. Self-evaluation procedures take good account of the views of pupils and parents.

Information from self-evaluation is used very effectively to develop and prioritise improvement plans with a clear focus on improving standards of teaching and learning. The plans include an appropriate range of relevant actions and identify members of staff with responsibility for their delivery. They also include realistic success criteria and well-defined timescales for completion. The school has been highly effective in securing improvements over recent years.

All teachers are actively involved in professional learning communities within and beyond the school. For example, the headteacher has worked with other, local schools to develop models of classroom observation and all staff have contributed within the school to ensure systematic planning for skills across the curriculum. These networks have contributed significantly to improving classroom practice and to the development of leadership and management skills.

Partnership working: Good

The school has good partnerships with parents, which build on effective induction procedures.

Assessment centre staff work very closely with an extensive range of strategic partners including parents, the local authority and mainstream schools. These partnerships have a positive impact on the work of the centre.

A range of partnerships with the secondary school, community groups and local businesses benefit the school. There are mutually beneficial links with a number of organisations such as NSPCC. In addition, the school raises funds for many local and national charities.

The school undertakes a number of successful joint activities with local primary and secondary schools, including standardising and moderating assessments and arranging staff training events.

Resource management: Good

The school makes good use of its accommodation, grounds and learning resources. Teaching and support staff understand their roles well and are carefully deployed to support learners effectively. The school has a well-established performance management system in which appropriate targets for staff development are set, monitored and evaluated. Staff training and development are linked closely to this

process. This improves the quality of teaching. There are good arrangements for planning, preparation and assessment time for teachers

The school offers good value for money because of its efficient use of funds and the good outcomes pupils achieve.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

The published data for the school includes the end of key stage assessments for all the pupils in the units. When the data for key stage 1 is disaggregated, and pupils in mainstream classes are compared to those in similar schools, there is a clear upward trend over the last three years in the proportion of the total number of pupils achieving level 2 (the expected level at seven years of age) at the end of the key stage in English, mathematics and science (the core subject indicator). Performance was in the upper 25% for the core subject indicator in 2010 and 2011 and in the upper 25% for all individual core subjects in 2011. The proportion of more able pupils in the mainstream class attaining the higher level 3 in mathematics was above the average for the family in 2011. However, the proportion of more able pupils achieving this higher level in English and science was below the family average.

When the data for all the pupils in key stage 1, including those in the units, is considered, performance in the core subject indicator does not compare favourably with the average for other schools in the family. It has been consistently below this family average for the last three years. When performance is compared with that of similar schools on the basis of proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals, the school is in the lowest 25% of such schools.

As in key stage 1, the published data for key stage 2 includes assessments for all pupils, including those in the units. Disaggregated data, allowing comparison of mainstream pupils with those of similar schools, confirms the improving trend in performance over the last four years and places the school in the highest 25% of similar schools for performance in the core subject indicator and all individual core subjects in 2011. The proportion of more able pupils in the mainstream class attaining the higher level 5 was above the average for the family for all core subjects in 2011.

When the performance of all the pupils, including those in the units, is taken into account for key stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving level 4 (the expected level at 11 years of age) in the core subject indicator still shows a clear upward trend over the last four years. However, with the exception of mathematics in 2010, performance in the core subject indicator and individual core subjects was below the average for the family of schools for this period. Comparisons with similar schools on the basis of the proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals places the school consistently in the lowest 25% of such schools.

Scrutiny of learners' books and other work confirms the evidence provided by the disaggregated data in respect of standards in the school's mainstream classes and the progress made by pupils.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Fifty-four parents completed the questionnaire. Twenty-one added written comments. Nearly all are positive and express overall satisfaction with the school.

All parents:

- say that their child likes school;
- think that teaching is good;
- think that their child is encouraged to keep healthy and to take regular exercise;
- say that their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs;
- think that they are kept well informed about their child's progress;
- feel comfortable about approaching the school with any suggestions or problems;
- think that their child is helped to become more mature to take on responsibility; and
- believe that the school is well run.

Nearly all parents:

- think that their child is safe at school;
- consider that staff treat all pupils fairly and with respect;
- feel that their child was helped to settle in well and think that pupils are well behaved;
- consider that teaching is good and that staff expect their child to work hard and do his or her best;
- think that their child is being well prepared for moving on to the next stage of his/her education;
- think that the homework given builds well on what their child learns at school;
- say that they understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints; and
- believe that there is a good range of activities provided.

Most parents:

- believe that pupils behave well in school.

Responses to learner questionnaires

One hundred and twenty key stage 2 pupils completed the questionnaire.

All pupils:

- say that they feel safe in school;
- say that they know whom to ask if they find work hard;
- think that they learn to keep healthy;
- believe that they have plenty of opportunities for regular exercise;
- think that they are helped to learn and to make progress; and
- know what to do and whom to ask if they find their work hard.

Nearly all pupils:

- consider that the school deals well with any bullying;
- say that they know whom to talk to if they are worried or upset;
- feel that they are doing well at school;
- consider that homework helps them to improve;
- think that they have enough books and equipment; and
- feel that pupils behave well at playtimes and lunch time.

Most pupils:

- think that nearly all children behave well so that they can get their work done.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Iwan Roberts	Reporting Inspector
Chris Dolby	Team Inspector
Linda Jane Williams	Team Inspector
Justine Barlow	Lay Inspector
Andrew Liptrot	Peer Inspector
Richard Lloyd (Headteacher)	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FYear 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

Glossary of terms – Primary

National Curriculum

Expected National Curriculum levels

- By the end of the key stage 1, at the age of seven, learners are expected to reach level 2 and the more able to reach level 3.
- By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of eleven, learners are expected to reach level 4 and the more able to reach level 5.

Core subject indicator in all key stages

The core subject indicator relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh first language, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum. Learners must gain at least the expected level in either English or Welsh first language together with mathematics and science to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Schools and local authorities may refer to performance relative to their family of schools. These families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to that of similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.