



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

**A report on**

**Rhosymedre Community Primary School  
Parc Road  
Rhosymedre  
LL14 3EG**

**Date of inspection: September 2017**

**by**

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

## About Rhosymedre Community Primary School

Rhosymedre Community Primary School is on the edge of a large housing development, south of Wrexham, between Ruabon and Llangollen. The area was a former Communities First area and faces the challenges linked with social and economic deprivation.

There are 243 pupils on roll aged from 3 to 11 years of age, including 30 part-time nursery pupils. Pupils are taught in eight single age classes. Just under 10% of the school's pupils have joined mid-year, often on managed transfers from other schools. In addition, there is a mixed-age key stage 2 resource provision, providing education for 11 pupils from across Wrexham who have a wide range of additional learning needs.

Around 43% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is much higher than the Wales average of 19%. The school states that around 50% of pupils are on the additional needs register, which is much higher than the Wales average of 21%. A very few pupils have a statement of special education needs. Most pupils are white British. About 5% of pupils speak English as an additional language and no pupils speak Welsh at home. The local authority cares for a very few pupils.

The school was last inspected in March 2011. The headteacher, who was previously the deputy headteacher, took up her post in September 2011.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.  
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

## Summary

Rhosymedre Community Primary School is an exceptionally caring and nurturing community that ensures pupils feel safe, secure and happy. The working relationships and high levels of trust and respect between staff and pupils are outstanding. Most pupils make good progress from their starting points, particularly in developing their speaking and listening skills. Teachers plan a curriculum that engages pupils and helps them to become confident, independent learners. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide strong leadership and a clear sense of strategic direction to the school's work; both are extremely passionate about the community they serve. They receive strong support from staff who all believe in and work towards achieving the school's vision.

<b>Inspection area</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
<b>Standards</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Wellbeing and attitudes to learning</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Teaching and learning experiences</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Care, support and guidance</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Good</b>

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve pupils' ability to extend their writing
- R2 Improve pupils' standards in Welsh and their knowledge of Welsh culture and heritage
- R3 Provide regular opportunities for staff to share the best practices in teaching already in the school and to observe the good practices in learning and teaching in other schools

## **What happens next**

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to how it develops pupils' early speaking, listening, reading and writing skills and also on how the school has become a nurturing community that improves pupils' attitudes to school and behaviour, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

## Main findings

### Standards: Good

A majority of pupils enter the school with literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills that are below those expected for their age. Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress from their starting points.

Pupils in nursery and reception make outstanding progress in developing their speech and language skills. Many begin to speak clearly in sentences and show a good understanding of a wider range of words. They gain confidence in using their communication skills and discuss their play eagerly, often being the initiators of conversations with both adults and each other. As pupils move through the school, they continue to develop their speaking and listening skills extremely well. Their confidence carries on growing and they become more comfortable speaking to larger groups and audiences for a range of purposes. Pupils in Year 6, for example, explain their strategies and reasoning to the whole class when solving mathematical problems.

Pupils in the foundation phase develop their reading skills effectively. They build a bank of words that they recognise on sight and use their knowledge of sounds to help them work out unfamiliar words. Across the school, as pupils' experiences widen and they develop a more extensive vocabulary, their reading fluency, expression and understanding of texts improve. More able pupils and older pupils in key stage 2 enjoy discussing the books they have read. They make predictions about what may happen next and find information relatively comfortably using scanning techniques.

Pupils in the foundation phase and lower key stage 2 make steady progress in developing their writing skills. In nursery and reception, pupils understand that the marks they make have meaning. For example, in reception, groups of pupils make story maps of the journey of the gingerbread man. They use symbols, pictures and letters to retell the story and read their work back with enthusiasm and pride. Pupils begin to write for a suitable range of purposes as they move through the school, but they do not always develop their ideas well enough to extend their writing. Older pupils gain confidence in their writing ability and produce longer pieces of text where they explain their ideas well. They respond positively to suggestions from their teacher and their peers on how to improve their initial attempts. For example, they make alterations such as changing words for greater effect and redrafting sections to make points clearer.

Most pupils develop their mathematical skills successfully and apply these skills well in a range of practical situations such as when Year 1 pupils explore capacity through their water play. Most pupils develop a good understanding of the different areas of mathematics, such as measures, number and shape. For example, Year 5 pupils use their knowledge of how to calculate the perimeter of simple shapes to build a zoo for the animals that have escaped from Pandora's box. Pupils gain confidence in tackling word problems and use their reasoning skills well to find solutions. A strength of pupils' mathematical work is their willingness to persevere and try different methods. For example, older pupils try out different strategies to solve two

digit multiplication problems, checking their answers by using inverse operations. Pupils make sound progress in developing their mental calculation skills and recall of key facts.

Most pupils develop their information communication and technology (ICT) skills usefully. Younger pupils know how to access and use Hwb and are confident in storing and retrieving their work. Pupils explore a good range of applications and become confident users of ICT. In key stage 2, pupils apply a suitable range of ICT skills in many areas of the curriculum. For example, they collect information to create data bases, use QR codes and make short movies with voice-overs when they play the role of an evacuee in the Second World War.

Most pupils in the foundation phase understand the Welsh used by staff and respond using an appropriate range of familiar greetings and phrases. The majority of pupils in key stage 2 use basic vocabulary and sentence patterns well, for example when discussing their likes and dislikes. They read appropriate Welsh books with increasing understanding. Many write short pieces well using familiar vocabulary and sentence patterns, for example when writing about themselves. However, across the school too few pupils have enough knowledge of Welsh language patterns or a wide enough vocabulary to enable them to communicate confidently in different situations.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent**

The strength of working relationships between pupils and staff is an outstanding feature of the school's work. These relationships underpin the school's culture and play a pivotal role in improving pupils' attitudes to learning, motivation and behaviour. Pupils have exceptionally high levels of trust in the staff and believe strongly that they will always do their best for them. This builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem and helps them become independent learners and thinkers. For example, in the foundation phase pupils confidently make their own decisions about how and what they learn as they explore all aspects of their environment. Older pupils show a good understanding of the purpose of assessment to move their learning forward. They respond maturely and swiftly to comments from their teacher and peers on how to improve their work.

Nearly all pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. If incidents do occur, staff and pupils work together to find solutions and this is key in helping pupils to take responsibility for their decisions and actions. Pupils copy the behaviours modelled by staff and overall are extremely polite to, and understanding of, each other. Pupils who have had difficulty settling in other schools respond very positively to the school's behaviour management strategies and this improves greatly their attitude towards school and their attendance. Nearly all of these pupils integrate successfully into the school's mainstream or nurture provision.

As a result of the exemplary support pupils receive for their social, emotional and learning needs, nearly all pupils engage purposefully in their learning and concentrate well in line with their stage of development. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards learning and do not give up even when they find activities difficult. Pupils are motivated to learn and are very keen to improve their skills and talents.

Pupils develop strong co-operation and collaboration skills. From a young age, they learn to respect each other and listen to the opinions of others. This leads to a calm and productive atmosphere in all areas of the school.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of keeping themselves safe in school, at home and online. Most know it is important to keep themselves fit and healthy. Many pupils take part enthusiastically in physical activities both as part of their curriculum and as extra-curricular activities. Pupils recently enjoyed learning football skills from a professional player. Pupils have a good understanding of what makes a healthy diet. All classes take part in the teeth-cleaning project. This improves pupils' awareness of the importance of dental hygiene.

Many pupils and parents have responded positively to the school's focus on improving attendance and pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly. For example, nearly 100 pupils now attend the school's breakfast club and this has improved their attendance and punctuality. Despite these efforts, overall, attendance has not improved enough in comparison to that of similar schools.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Good**

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Nearly all teachers ask a wide range of questions that require pupils to think for themselves. Most teachers encourage pupils well to extend and justify their answers. Teachers in the early years of the foundation phase have a very good understanding of child development and how young children learn best. They plan activities and lessons that are adapted exceptionally well to meet the needs and interests of individual pupils. In many classes across the school, teachers plan a range of activities that challenge pupils of all abilities suitably. However, in a few classes, the challenge for the most able pupils is not always high enough and pupils are not consistently encouraged to write purposefully at length. Teaching assistants work well alongside teachers to support pupils' skills and social development. All staff are very good language and role models for pupils.

Most teachers' feedback to pupils is of a good quality. For example, instant verbal feedback in the foundation phase and focused written feedback at the end of key stage 2 helps pupils to improve their work. Many teachers provide useful and regular opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work and the work of their peers.

Teachers in the foundation phase, plan high quality and imaginative activities across all areas of all learning. In particular, the provision to develop pupils' speech and language skills is outstanding. The school's provision for pupils' enhanced and continuous play is another noteworthy area. For example, pupils have free and open access to a very well planned outside area, which provides stimulating and interesting opportunities for pupils to explore, experiment and immerse themselves in their learning. All staff in the foundation phase take very good account of pupils' interests and what pupils want to learn about. This leads to high levels of pupil motivation and engagement. For example, Year 1 pupils initiated the current project on building after watching the workers start to build a new classroom on the school site.

In key stage 2, planning is systematic and effective. This helps teachers to plan suitable tasks that build well on pupils' previous learning. Teachers provide a

stimulating range of learning experiences that meet the needs of nearly all pupils. These planned experiences help pupils become confident and independent learners. For example, pupils in Year 4 take responsibility for organising a number game that develops their numeracy skills and encourages them to set personal challenges.

Teachers deliver worthwhile and interesting opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum. However, they do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills. Provision to develop pupil's numeracy and ICT skills is suitable.

Provision to develop the Cwricwlwm Cymreig and pupils' Welsh language skills is inconsistent. As a result, pupils do not develop their understanding of the language, heritage and culture of Wales well enough.

### **Care, support and guidance: Excellent**

The school is an exceptionally caring and nurturing community that ensures pupils feel safe, secure and happy. Staff know their pupils very well. As a result, from the moment pupils enter the school, they receive exemplary support for their social, emotional and learning needs.

Individual support programmes are highly effective in supporting pupils in developing their speech and language skills and improving pupils' behaviour and attitude towards school. The school is particularly effective in supporting pupils who have had difficulties settling in other schools. The school's outreach programme to support schools in the area with managing challenging behaviours is exemplary. Teaching assistants play a pivotal role in providing an exceptional level of care and support for vulnerable pupils and those with additional learning needs. The school provides very effectively for pupils identified as having additional learning needs. Personal support plans and individual education plans are concise and clear. The plans have realistic targets that challenge and support pupils to improve their learning and develop new skills. These personalised plans ensure pupils get the specific help they need to improve their learning and skills.

Staff use the school's tracking systems efficiently to monitor the progress of all pupils. This helps staff to identify quickly any pupils in need of additional support or challenge. For example, early identification of pupils with speech and language delay means that pupils receive timely and effective support.

The school has a successful and supportive relationship with parents. They appreciate greatly the support they receive from the school in terms of both their own wellbeing and that of their children. The highly effective partnerships the school has with other services means that they work together to tailor a package of support that meets the needs of individual families. The school also actively encourages parents to become involved in their child's learning through attending workshops and providing adult friendly information booklets.

The school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn about the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices and has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. For example, healthy snacks are encouraged and pupils enjoy 'free fruit Friday'. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in a valuable range of after school clubs. For example, Year 6 pupils can attend an after

school swimming club run by staff and held at the local leisure centre. The school ensures pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example through internet safety activities.

The school gives pupils many suitable opportunities to take responsibility and develop their leadership skills. For example, school councillors have reviewed the schools' healthy school policy. The school's e-cadets are proactive in sharing information that helps other pupils develop their understanding of keeping safe on line.

Through regular assemblies and curriculum work, pupils celebrate diversity and develop their spiritual and ethical understanding. This helps them to learn well about the importance of trust, perseverance and tolerance. Pupils also benefit from a good range of cultural experiences, such as hearing performances from orchestras and groups who visit the school.

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

### **Leadership and management: Good**

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide strong leadership and a clear sense of strategic direction to the school's work; both are extremely passionate about the community they serve. They are highly effective in setting and promoting a vision for the school, which focuses on respect, improving wellbeing, building community relationships and continuous improvements in pupils' standards. Senior leaders lead by example and model the behaviours they expect from staff exceptionally well. They have high expectations of everyone and themselves. Leaders receive strong support from staff who all believe in, and work towards, achieving the school's vision.

Leaders ensure that regular staff meetings address the school's priorities effectively. They focus purposefully on improving pupils' attainment and provide valuable opportunities for feedback to staff on monitoring activities. As a result, all members of staff are clear about their roles, work well as a team and take a full part in school improvement activities. The governing body is effective and discharges its functions well. Governors understand the school's context, its strengths and priorities for improvement. Senior leaders keep governors well informed about the standards that pupils achieve. This enables governors to hold the school successfully to account.

Self-evaluation is comprehensive, robust and effective. Leaders undertake a wide range of self-evaluation activities to help them identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement accurately. They analyse data rigorously, review pupils' work and observe lessons. Teachers regularly look at pupils' work together to determine if the evidence shows progress. This ensures consistency and accountability among staff for the quality of the school's provision. School leaders listen carefully to the opinions of parents and pupils. This is one of the school's strengths and ensures that pupils and parents have a clear voice in terms of improving provision and raising standards of wellbeing.

The school uses information from self-evaluation effectively to identify a manageable number of appropriate whole-school improvement priorities that they feel will have the greatest impact on outcomes for pupils. Leaders work closely with governors and

staff to implement these plans and to monitor progress against the improvement priorities. This ensures that school improvement planning is effective in leading to better outcomes for pupils.

Leaders manage resources successfully to support pupils and ensure improvement. Professional learning activities link well to staff's development needs as well as to school priorities. Within the school, teachers work closely together to share ideas and learn from each other. They are very welcoming to staff from other schools, who visit regularly to look at the school's foundation phase provision and their methods for supporting vulnerable pupils and pupils with challenging behaviours. However, there are not enough regular opportunities for staff to share the best practices in teaching already in the school or to learn from the good practice in other schools.

The headteacher, with the support of the governing body, manages the budget and monitors the effect of expenditure rigorously. The school is highly successful in reducing the effect of poverty and deprivation on vulnerable pupils. The school makes particularly good use of the pupil development grant. This has had a positive effect on improving the standards and wellbeing of pupils eligible for free school meals.

## 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))

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

<b>Excellent</b>	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
<b>Good</b>	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
<b>Adequate and needs improvement</b>	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement</b>	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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

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