

A report on
Northop Hall C.P. School
Llys Ben
Northop Hall
Mold
Flintshire
CH7 6HS

Date of inspection: June 2013

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.

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Context

Northop Hall Community Primary School serves the village of Northop Hall and the surrounding area in the county of Flintshire. There are 162 pupils aged three to 11 years at the school including 22 pupils in the nursery. The school has six classes. Around 2% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This figure is significantly lower than the local and national averages.

Nearly all pupils come from homes where English is the main language and no pupils speak Welsh as a first language. Very few pupils receive support for English as an additional language. The school identifies that nearly 10% of pupils have additional learning needs. Currently, no pupil has a statement of special educational need and no pupils are looked after by the local authority. There have been no fixed term pupil exclusions in the last 12 months.

The school was last inspected in 2007. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2012.

The individual school budget per pupil for Northop Hall C.P. School in 2012-2013 means that the budget is £3,101 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the primary schools in Flintshire is £13,748 and the minimum is £2,758. Northop Hall C.P. School is 47th out of the 73 primary schools in Flintshire in terms of its school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

The current performance of Northop Hall Community Primary School is adequate because:

- nearly all pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school;
- at the end of key stage 2, pupils' performance at the higher than expected level is good;
- most pupils have very good speaking and listening skills and apply their numeracy skills well across the curriculum;
- standards of behaviour are very good and relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and productive; and
- pupils receive a good range of learning experiences.

However:

- standards in the three assessed areas of learning at the end of the Foundation Phase in 2012 do not compare well with those of pupils in other similar schools;
- pupils' performance at key stage 2 in English and science over the last few years has not compared well with that of pupils in other similar schools;
- Foundation Phase pupils do not develop their reading skills well enough; and
- the quality of teaching is too variable.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are judged as good because:

- there are good arrangements for self-evaluation and school improvement planning;
- there is a clear focus on priorities that relate well to improvements in standards of teaching and learning;
- the new headteacher has had a positive impact on raising standards of pupils' progress in a short amount of time;
- leadership is effective and staff work well together; and
- there are a range of effective partnerships that impact positively on pupils' learning experiences and wellbeing.

Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards of reading in the Foundation Phase and lower key stage 2
- R2 Improve pupils' knowledge of punctuation and spelling and improve their presentation and handwriting skills
- R3 Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good
- R4 Raise standards through the effective use of marking and assessment strategies
- R5 Ensure that class sizes are well balanced in terms of pupil numbers

What happens next?

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Adequate

Standards: Adequate

Most pupils enter the school with very good skills, knowledge and understanding. Overall, they make good progress by the end of key stage 2.

Many pupils have very strong speaking and listening skills. They use these skills well to answer questions set by teachers and to communicate their ideas effectively, for example during role play situations. Many pupils work very well with each other during discussions and collaborative tasks. They talk confidently about learning experiences, often using an extensive range of vocabulary.

In the Foundation Phase, many pupils make insufficient progress in developing their reading skills. Often, they do not have suitable strategies to help them read for pleasure or understanding. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils read confidently with fluency and good comprehension. More able pupils explain preferences for authors and styles of books well and can read challenging texts successfully.

Many pupils make appropriate progress in developing their writing skills. By the end of the Foundation Phase, they write independently and imaginatively to create stories and reports. By the end of key stage 2, they write purposefully in a variety of contexts across the curriculum. Overall, the content of many pupils' written work is good. However, in too many cases the accuracy and quality of spelling, punctuation and presentation are not good enough.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their Welsh language skills. In the Foundation Phase, they use Welsh to communicate effectively within lessons. Many older pupils are able to hold short conversations in the present and past tenses and read well from suitable texts. The standard of written Welsh is good. Pupils write accurately for a variety of worthwhile reasons, for example to create book reviews or to email members of the school staff.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their mathematical skills as they move through the school. They apply their numeracy skills consistently and well across a range of subjects within the curriculum.

Pupils who need extra support with their learning make good progress. Most more able pupils respond particularly well to additional challenges provided in lessons. Pupils entitled to free school meals generally achieve as well as other pupils and those who are new to the English language usually make speedy and significant progress.

Due to the variable and sometimes small number of pupils at the end of both key stages, the results of pupil assessments have to be treated with care because one pupil's results can have a significant impact on school performance.

Foundation Phase pupils' achievements at the expected outcome (outcome 5) are very slightly below the average for other schools in the family in language literacy and communication, mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity. They also place the school in the lowest 25% of similar schools across all three areas of learning. At the higher than expected outcome (outcome 6), pupil performance places the school in the bottom 25% of similar schools in all three areas of learning and is significantly below family and all-Wales averages.

In comparison with relative performance levels in the school's family, key stage 2 performance has been variable over the last three years in English, mathematics and science at both the expected level (level 4) and the higher level (level 5). The proportion of pupils who attain the expected level or above, in English, mathematics and science when combined, consistently places the school in the lower 50% of similar schools.

The school's performance, at the higher level, is normally good. In 2012, performance in English, mathematics and science placed the school in the top 25% of similar schools and was well above the family average in all three subjects.

In recent years, at key stage 2, girls' performance at both the expected and higher levels has generally been better than that of boys.

Wellbeing: Good

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are polite and respectful towards adults and each other. During lessons, most pupils show interest in their work, sustain concentration for a suitable amount of time and work well in collaboration with others. Most pupils display very good levels of confidence and independence from a very early age. They take good advantage of opportunities to influence their own learning, for example by identifying the aspects of a topic they would like to learn about.

Rates of attendance have been consistently good for the last three years and compare well with those of other similar schools. Nearly all pupils arrive punctually at the start of the school day.

Nearly all pupils behave very well in classes and around the school. They feel safe in school and are confident that the school deals well with any bullying. Most pupils have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy. They demonstrate healthy lifestyle choices, for example by participating in regular physical activity or by choosing to eat fruit during break times.

Pupils respond well to opportunities to take on additional responsibilities in the school, for example when reading with younger pupils. The school council plays an active role in the life of the school, members acting as mentors for the school's 'problem shared a problem halved' initiative and organising events to support charities both nationally and in the local community.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Adequate
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Learning experiences: Adequate

The school provides broad and balanced coverage of the National Curriculum that meets the needs of most pupils well. Teachers plan a wide range of learning experiences that engage nearly all pupils successfully. The school offers a good range of visits that enhance the curriculum, for example residential trips to Nant Bwlch yr Haearn. Pupils receive worthwhile enrichment activities beyond the school day such as a gardening club.

Pupils receive many opportunities to develop and apply their skills purposefully across the curriculum. Nearly all staff develop pupils' speaking and listening, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills well. Pupils are occasionally encouraged to contribute to the planning process. This helps to promote independent learning and thinking skills. However, there is not a consistent whole school approach to develop pupils' reading and writing skills progressively.

Provision for the Welsh language and the Welsh dimension is successful across the school. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about their locality and about Wales' history and culture.

Provision for pupils' education for sustainable development and global citizenship is good and permeates many areas of the curriculum. The school actively promotes an understanding of sustainability issues through events such as 'Walk to Work'. Well-chosen topics enable pupils to learn about the lives of others and develop a good sense of global citizenship.

Teaching: Adequate

Overall, the majority of teaching is good. Most teachers have up-to-date professional knowledge and plan learning experiences that develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding well. Lessons generally build successfully on pupils' prior learning. All adults are very good language role models and this has a positive impact on the standards of speaking and listening that pupils achieve. Relationships between adults and pupils are respectful and productive.

Where teaching is most effective, learning experiences match pupils' needs and interests well. These lessons promote active learning, move forward at a lively pace and challenge pupils to achieve high standards. Where teaching is less successful, tasks are not as well suited to the needs of pupils. Pupils are unclear about what they need to do to succeed and the standard of work expected from them is occasionally too low.

In a minority of lessons, teachers use assessment for learning strategies successfully. For example, many older pupils reflect well on their learning and evaluate their progress effectively. Teachers mark pupils' work frequently and comment positively about what pupils have done well. However, marking is not consistently effective in helping pupils to improve their work or in preventing them from repeating basic errors.

Teachers track pupil progress effectively and many use this information to good effect, for example to ensure that more able pupils receive learning experiences that are sufficiently challenging. The school has developed a useful target-setting system that enables older pupils to be aware of their longer term learning goals.

Parents and carers receive appropriate information and reports on their child's achievements and wellbeing.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school's provides effective care support and guidance for all pupils. This provision is based on a clear understanding of the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. The school makes good use of a range of specialist services in order to provide appropriate individual support for pupils.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good. Staff identify pupils' additional needs at an early stage and the school provides well-planned, targeted support through a wide range of programmes. Targets in individual education plans are specific and clearly address each pupil's needs. Effective systems are in place to monitor and assess the progress pupils make and parents are well informed about their child's progress.

There are many opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively to develop their social skills. As a result, pupils are supportive and respectful of each other while engaging in group or paired work. Whole school and class led assemblies provide suitable opportunities for pupils to reflect upon moral and spiritual issues.

Arrangements for promoting and developing health and wellbeing are effective. There are effective arrangements to deal with any bullying or oppressive behaviour. All pupils have regular access to a wide range of sporting activities. The school has effective arrangements in place to ensure good attendance levels.

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

Learning environment: Good

The school is a caring and fully inclusive community where all staff and pupils demonstrate mutual trust and respect. The school takes good account of the diversity of pupils' backgrounds. It ensures that pupils who are new to the school are welcomed and helped to settle quickly. Pupils are encouraged to be friendly, polite and courteous to each other and visitors.

The school has a suitable policy and procedures for promoting equal opportunities, which is well understood by all staff. As a result, all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

The modern school building and grounds are well maintained and secure. The premises offers a pleasant learning environment, which is sufficient for the numbers of pupils on roll. Classroom spaces are used thoughtfully and to best effect.

Displays are of a high quality. They celebrate pupil achievements and support pupils' learning effectively. There are many suitable resources of good quality in all areas to promote pupils' learning. The school has developed its outside areas effectively to support teaching and learning.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

Although the headteacher has been in post for less than one year, she has established a clear educational vision that provides purposeful direction to the work of the school. The school's vision takes good account of the views and needs of pupils. The headteacher and assistant headteacher form an effective leadership team. They demonstrate high professional standards and have a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

All staff have clear roles in the teaching and learning process. Regular meetings provide good opportunities for all staff to contribute to the strategic direction of the school. Leaders challenge staff to bring about improvements in provision, for example by introducing a whole school tracking system to identify gaps in pupils' learning.

The governing body provides useful support to the school. Governors are aware of the school's current strengths and weaknesses. They have a good knowledge of the priorities within the school improvement plan. Governors visit the school regularly to develop a better understanding of its work. However, they do not consistently challenge the school about the standards it achieves or the decisions it makes.

School leaders ensure that there is a suitable focus on national and local priorities, for example raising standards in Welsh and boys' writing.

Improving quality: Good

The school makes good use of the rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning to inform the self-evaluation process. All members of staff and the governing body contribute to the self-evaluation process and the school takes good account of the views of pupils and parents when evaluating the school's performance.

The school's self-evaluation report gives a precise and accurate overview of the school's current position. It contains a thorough analysis of performance data and clearly identifies areas in need of improvement.

Staff use the outcomes of self-evaluation to inform the priorities in the school development plan. The plan provides clear guidance on how the school will address the priorities and how staff will measure the impact of action taken. A number of priorities in the current school development plan have already led to measureable improvements, for example in developing the provision for pupils with additional needs.

The school has made good progress in addressing nearly all of the recommendations from the last inspection. However, the consistent use of assessment for learning strategies remains an issue.

Staff have developed strong links with other local schools and work closely with them as a network of professional practice. The current work with these schools is supporting the school's drive to improve standards in literacy effectively.

Partnership working: Good

The school works well in partnership with other providers. Staff liaise with the local playgroup to ensure a smooth transition for children starting school. There are effective arrangements with the local high school that support pupils well as they move to the next stage of their education. The school works effectively with other primary schools in the area on a range of activities, including the moderation and assessment of pupils' work.

Parents are encouraged to work in partnership with the school and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Staff keep parents well informed through regular whole school and class newsletters. The school holds useful sessions to provide parents with guidance on how they can support their children at home.

The school plays an active role in the local community, for example by supporting elderly members of the locality and by working closely with vulnerable families.

The school liaises well with many external support agencies within the local authority. Senior leaders actively seek support from the local authority and act on any advice given.

Resource management: Adequate

There are sufficient, well-qualified staff to teach the curriculum effectively. The school deploys staff well to make best use of their time, expertise and experience. However, on a few occasions leaders do not balance class size well enough across the school.

There are suitable arrangements to support the professional development of all staff with a good range of training opportunities linked to the personal needs of individuals or to the school's priorities. The performance management and training arrangements are well planned and effective. Planning, preparation and assessment time for staff supports teaching, learning and leadership development well. Staff make good use of the plentiful resources available. The headteacher and the governing body's finance committee monitor the school's budget well. They keep spending under constant review and plan carefully for future expenditure. They ensure that there is a close link between spending and the school's priorities for improvement.

However, in view of the outcomes achieved by pupils, the school provides adequate value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

The school is the eighth most challenged in its family of schools. The family is a group of schools that face broadly similar challenges.

In the Foundation Phase in 2012, about 83% of pupils achieved the expected outcome in the development of their language literacy and communication, mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity skills in combination. This is slightly below the average for the family of similar schools. The proportion of pupils who achieved above the expected outcome was significantly lower than the average for the family of schools in all three areas of learning.

In comparison to schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to receive free school meals, the school performs in the lowest 25% for the development of pupils' language literacy and communication, mathematical development and personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity skills at both the expected and higher expected outcomes.

In key stage 2, the percentage of pupils who attain the expected level or above in English, mathematics and science when combined is very close to the average for the family of schools. Over the last four years, the overall trend of performance has been downward. However, there was a significant improvement in performance in 2012 in all three assessed subjects. In 2012, the proportion of pupils who achieved the higher level was above the averages for the family of schools and Wales in English, mathematics and science.

In relation to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to receive free school meals, the school is in the lower 50% for performance in English, science and the core subject indicator. This has been the case for the last three years. The school is in the upper 50% for performance in mathematics and in the top 25% for performance in all three assessed subjects at the higher level.

In comparing the relative performance of boys and girls in the Foundation Phase, there is little significant difference at the expected outcome. At the higher outcome, girls' performance is significantly better than boys' in language, literacy and communication and in personal, social, wellbeing and cultural diversity skills, but the opposite is true for mathematical development. At key stage 2, girls consistently do better than boys at both the expected and higher levels.

Pupils entitled to free school meals generally achieve as well as other pupils.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Learner questionnaires (128 responses)

All, or nearly all pupils:

- feel safe in school and think that they are doing well;
- believe that the school provides lots of chances for them to get regular exercise and that the school helps them to keep healthy;
- know what to do and whom to ask if they find their work hard;
- believe that teachers and other adults in the school help them to learn and make progress; and
- know whom to talk to if worried or upset.

Most pupils feel that:

- the school deals well with any bullying;
- nearly all children behave well at playtime and lunchtime;
- they have enough books, equipment and computers to do their work; and
- homework helps them to understand and improve their school work.

Many pupils think that other children behave well so that they can get on with their work.

Overall, pupils' views at Northop Hall C.P. School are slightly more positive than those of pupils in other schools across Wales.

Parent or carers questionnaires (29 responses)

All, or nearly all parents or carers feel that:

- their child likes the school;
- their child is safe at school;
- their child was helped to settle when he or she first started school; and
- the school helps their child to become more mature and take responsibility.

Most parents or carers feel that:

- their child is making good progress at school;
- pupils behave well at school;
- teaching is good and staff expect children to work hard and do their best;
- they are comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or problems;
- the school is well run and staff treat the children fairly and with respect;
- their child is encouraged to be healthy and take regular exercise; and
- their child is well prepared for moving on to the next school.

Many parents feel that:

- they are satisfied with the school overall;
- there is a good range of activities including trips and visits;
- they understand the school's procedure for dealing with complaints; and
- their child receives appropriate additional support in relation to any particular individual needs.

A majority of parents feel that:

- they are kept well informed about their child's progress; and
- homework builds well on what their child learns at school.

Overall, these views are slightly less positive than those of other parents or carers across Wales. Parents' views, with regard to information received about their child's progress, the effectiveness of homework and the range of activities including trips and visits offered to their children, are significantly less positive than those of other parents across Wales.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Richard Lloyd	Reporting Inspector
Jane Williams	Team Inspector
Julie Ann Price	Lay Inspector
Owen Rogers	Peer Inspector
Lynne Bowen	School Nominee

Copies of the report

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

Year groups, the Foundation Phase 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 local authorities.

The following table sets out the age ranges relevant to each year group. For example, Year 1 refers to the group of pupils who reach the age of six and Year 13 is the year group who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	N	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	3-4	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 Foundation Phase and key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Nursery, 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

Foundation Phase indicator (FPI)

Progress in learning through the Foundation Phase is indicated by outcomes (from outcome 1 to outcome 6).

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) relates to the expected performance in three areas of learning in the Foundation Phase:

- literacy, language and communication in English or Welsh first language;
- mathematical development; and
- personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity.

By the end of the Foundation Phase, at the age of seven, pupils are expected to reach outcome 5 and the more able to reach outcome 6.

Pupils must achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) in the three areas above to gain the Foundation Phase indicator.

The core subject indicator (CSI)

Progress in learning through key stage 2 is indicated by levels (level 1 to level 5).

The core subject indicator in key stage 2 relates to the expected performance in the core subjects of the National Curriculum:

- English or Welsh first language;
- mathematics; and
- science

By the end of the key stage 2, at the age of 11, pupils are expected to reach level 4 and more able pupils to reach level 5.

Pupils must gain at least the expected level (level 4) in the three core subjects to gain the core subject indicator.

All-Wales Core Data sets

Inspection reports may refer to a school's performance relative to a family of schools or to schools with a broadly similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In relation to free school meals, schools are placed into one of five bands according to the three-year trend in the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals in the school. The school's performance is then placed into quartiles (from the top 25% to the bottom 25%) in relation to how well it is doing compared with other schools in the same free school meal band.

The Welsh Government created the families of schools (typically a group of 11 schools) to enable schools to compare their performance with that of similar schools across Wales. The composition of the families draws on a number of factors. These include the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the proportion living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wales. They also draw on the proportion of pupils with special education needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and pupils with English as an additional language.