



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

**A report on**

**Fairholme Prep. School  
The Mount  
Mount Road  
St Asaph  
Denbighshire  
LL17 0DH**

**Date of inspection: November 2017**

**by**

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

## About Fairholme Prep. School

Fairholme Preparatory School is an independent primary school in St. Asaph, Denbighshire, for boys and girls aged three to eleven years old. The school was founded in 1900 and moved to its present site in 1964. The current proprietors have owned the school since 2009.

The school is organised into two sections. The lower school is for pupils from kindergarten to Year 2, and the upper school is from Year 3 to Year 6. There are currently 89 pupils on roll, 21 of whom are in the kindergarten and reception classes. There is little difference in the total number of boys and girls although this varies in particular year groups across the school.

Many pupils live in the local area and a few travel from surrounding rural areas including from Anglesey. About 19% of pupils are from minority-ethnic backgrounds. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language. A very few pupils speak English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language. The school does not aim to make pupils bilingual in English and Welsh. The school identifies about 2% of pupils as having additional learning needs, including a very few with a statement of special educational needs.

As part of its admission procedures, the school will normally offer a place for all three-year-olds. Older pupils seeking to join the school are invited to attend an informal interview with their parents to meet the headteacher. The pupils then participate in a 'taster day,' during which the form teacher will assess their abilities to determine whether the school can meet their educational needs appropriately.

The school was last inspected in 2012, when the current headteacher was in post.

The school encourages pupils to 'aspire to excellence, maximise potential, develop confidence and express individuality' through fostering responsibility in 'a culture of caring'.

## Summary

Pupils at Fairholme Preparatory School have positive attitudes to their learning and most make strong progress in relation to their individual starting points. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy their lessons, engage positively with learning activities and behave well.

Teaching across the school is good. Teachers know their pupils well and provide helpful feedback to them during lessons. The school's care, support and guidance for its pupils make a significant contribution to their wellbeing, personal development and the high standards that they achieve. The proprietors provide strong leadership and they are successful in promoting effective team working throughout the school.

The school meets all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

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

## **Compliance with the regulations for registration**

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

### **The quality of education provided by the school**

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

### **The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

### **The suitability of proprietors and staff**

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

### **Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools**

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

### **The provision of information**

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

### **The manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Improve the quality of teaching further by sharing best practice more widely
- R2 Enhance the opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their problem-solving skills effectively
- R3 Strengthen arrangements for staff professional development

## **What happens next**

Estyn advises the proprietor to amend its current development plan to show what actions the school intends to take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents at the school.

## Main findings

### Standards: Good

Across the school, pupils have a wide range of abilities. Most pupils make strong progress in relation to their individual starting points as they move through the school. At the end of Year 6, many pupils' attainment in a range of standardised tests such as reading and spelling is well above that to be expected for their age. Pupils with additional learning needs generally make good or better progress in relation to their abilities.

Throughout the school, many pupils make strong progress in developing their subject knowledge, understanding and skills. They have accurate recall of their previous learning and use this well to help them in their current work.

Pupils' literacy skills are a strength throughout the school. Nearly all pupils develop strong oracy skills and listen well to adults and each other. Most pupils speak with great confidence and project their voice clearly, for example when speaking in assembly or reading their work aloud to the class. In relation to their age, these pupils use a range of mature vocabulary to express their opinions and ideas. For example, older pupils in the technology club explain their choice of structures and the scientific reasons for their model bridge designs particularly effectively.

In the lower school, pupils make secure progress in developing their reading skills. They increase their confidence and use a variety of methods such as sounding letters, if needed, to identify words. By the end of Year 2, most pupils read simple texts aloud competently. At key stage 2, the standards of pupils' reading are high. Most pupils develop as self-assured, fluent readers. They have a positive attitude towards reading and enjoy a range of different texts and favourite authors. Older pupils use skills such as skimming and scanning texts effectively to locate information from a range of sources quickly.

Many pupils make good progress in developing their writing skills as they progress through the school. Younger pupils develop their letter formation and early writing skills suitably. At key stage 2, many pupils write extensively for a variety of purposes using a wide range of effective punctuation and imaginative vocabulary to engage the reader successfully. For example in Year 3, they write interesting letters to friends describing their trip to the zoo. Most pupils use their writing skills effectively in other subjects, for example in Year 5 history lessons where they write well-informed accounts of farming methods in Tudor times. Nearly all pupils develop neat cursive handwriting and present their work with care.

Throughout the school, many pupils develop a secure understanding across the full range of mathematical topics. For example, most pupils in the reception class and Year 1 use a variety of different strategies to help them add and find the difference between numbers. Many older pupils make quick and mostly accurate mental calculations such as when Year 4 use analogue and digital clocks, and Year 6 pupils convert fractions to decimals. Most pupils transfer the skills that they have learnt in their mathematics lessons aptly to a variety of subjects across the curriculum such as when they use their measuring skills for recording weight, length and time in science.

Many pupils also apply these skills effectively to wider contexts, for example when members of the school council use their data handling skills to collect, analyse and present pupils' views about the lunch menu.

Most pupils develop their information and communications technology (ICT) skills competently from an early age and make effective use of these skills in a wide range of contexts. For example, kindergarten pupils use touch screen computers successfully to help them with their early writing skills. They draw letters with their fingers, select different colours to paint them and save their work appropriately. In key stage 2, most pupils use spreadsheets, databases and graphic packages skilfully. They make valuable use of a range of suitable websites and software resources to research topics for different subjects and to present their findings.

Overall, many pupils develop their thinking skills suitably. However, in a few lessons pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Mostly this is because these pupils do not think questions through carefully for themselves, or the work is either too difficult or does not stretch them enough.

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

Throughout the school, nearly all pupils feel safe and secure and have high levels of wellbeing. They are confident that the school deals with any allegations of bullying well and they know who to speak to if they are upset or have a problem.

Almost all pupils have a clear understanding of the importance of making healthy choices to keep themselves fit and about how to lead a healthy lifestyle. For example, members of the school council work creatively to organise different choices of fruit snacks for pupils to eat at break times. Most pupils participate enthusiastically in sport activities in lessons and through extra-curricular clubs such as badminton, volleyball, hockey and gymnastics. Across the school, nearly all pupils attend at least two extra-curricular clubs. Through their participation, in a wide variety of activities including for example harp, guitar, drama and technology, as well as physical activities, these pupils develop valuable creative, personal, and social skills.

Nearly all pupils behave very well in lessons and as they move around the building. They are courteous and respectful both to staff and each other, including playing well together at breaks, looking after their friends and helping younger pupils. Nearly all pupils are welcoming to visitors and share their experiences of the school confidently and enthusiastically.

Almost all pupils show strong motivation and positive attitudes towards their learning. They enjoy their lessons and engage positively with learning activities. Most pupils are well organised and suitably prepared for their lessons. They sustain their concentration successfully for appropriate periods of time. However, a few pupils rely too heavily on the class teacher to support their learning.

Across the school, many pupils carry out a range of age-appropriate responsibilities maturely, from being a 'special helper' of the day to organising charity events and being a member of the school council. Older pupils take on wider leadership roles such as being buddies to younger classes of pupils successfully. They take these roles very seriously and are proud of the contribution that they make to school life.

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

The school provides a curriculum that is broad and balanced and meets the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

In the lower school, staff provide pupils with a comprehensive topic-based approach that has a strong emphasis on play and active learning. In key stage 2, teachers plan thoroughly for the provision of individual subjects and many of the skills that pupils require. These combined arrangements help to ensure suitable continuity and progression for pupils' learning as they move through the school.

Across the school, the overall quality of teaching is good. Nearly all lessons have clear learning objectives, which are shared with the pupils. Most teachers have secure subject knowledge and they know the abilities of their pupils well. In many lessons, this information is used skilfully to ensure that activities and tasks meet the needs of all pupils, and enables them to make suitable progress. In the majority of lessons, the enthusiasm of the teacher, coupled with thoughtful planning for the active engagement of pupils, helps pupils to gain a fascination for the subject and sustain their interest and concentration successfully. For example, teachers make effective use of pupils' own examples such as older pupils finding the probability of owning or experiencing something suggested by others during the introduction or consolidation stage of the mathematics session. This approach helps to extend and deepen pupils' understanding, as well as to address any misconceptions.

During almost all lessons, teachers provide encouraging verbal feedback to pupils and offer relevant advice as to how they can improve the quality of their work. Most pupils respond well to this advice, and routinely correct errors in their work.

In a few lessons, pupils do not make enough progress largely because tasks are not matched suitably to pupils' abilities. In addition, a few teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to learn independently and to develop their problem solving and higher-order thinking skills.

Across the school, the planning and provision for pupils to develop and reinforce their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are secure. Almost all lesson plans identify clearly the specific skills pupils will need to draw on and how these apply to their work during the lesson. This approach is particularly helpful in supporting pupils' own target-setting and monitoring for the development of their literacy and numeracy skills.

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

The school's arrangements for the care, support and guidance of its pupils make a significant contribution to their wellbeing, personal development and the high standards that they achieve.

The school has a robust tracking system, which is used effectively to monitor pupils' progress. Valuable information from the analysis of a wide range of data informs teachers' planning appropriately. It also helps identify those pupils who need additional support or challenge, for example through 'catch-up' or 'go ahead' plans. Class teachers review the progress of pupils on these plans carefully and make necessary adjustments, where appropriate.

Pupils with additional learning needs receive suitable support, which includes the beneficial individual help that teaching assistants provide in lessons. The school also makes effective use of outside agencies to support the specific needs of a very few pupils.

Staff, pupils and parents work well together as a cohesive 'family' unit to ensure pupils' high levels of wellbeing. The school's close relationship with parents is helped by frequent interaction with class teachers and beneficial communication channels such as the school newsletter. Class teachers make effective use of homework diaries and interactive online resources to help parents to support their child's learning at home. The school's reports to parents are generally informative, but do not always provide enough detail about how their child can make further improvements to their work.

The school supports pupils well to develop their understanding about making healthy lifestyle choices. For example, there are useful strategies to promote healthy eating such as the supply of fruit only snacks at afternoon break time. Aspects of the personal and social education programme (PSE) include beneficial visits from the local police community support officer to discuss topics such as personal safety and how to stay safe on the internet.

Pupils have valuable opportunities to take an active role in the running of the school. Members of the school council from Year 1 through to Year 6 are involved in making helpful decisions about improvements in appropriate aspects of the school's work. For example, they identify areas within the school that they would like to improve such as the hygiene for the drinking water fountains.

The school's arrangements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is an important aspect of its work. For example, the school's PSE programme engages pupils well in moral and social issues such as planning their involvement in the 'UNICEF Day for Change'. The school has valuable cultural links with the local community to provide pupils with beneficial enrichment opportunities. These activities include groups of pupils performing regularly in musical events at St Asaph's Cathedral and at local festivals and care homes. All pupils participate in musical and drama events as part of the curriculum and they recently presented a concert to celebrate the opening of the Mount Theatre. Pupils also benefit from the many opportunities provided at lunchtime and after-school to participate in clubs for the arts, sports and physical activities, science and technology.

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

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

The proprietors provide the school with strong leadership based on a vision of striving for excellence. They are fully committed to continually improving all aspects of the school's work. An experienced and effective senior leadership team support these leaders well and play an important part in securing high standards of wellbeing and outcomes for pupils.

There is a powerful ethos of team work within the school. All members of staff have clear roles and responsibilities and they carry out these roles diligently. Regular staff meetings help support effective communication between members of staff and enable them to share good practice with each other.

Staff undertake suitable self-evaluation activities to help identify the school's strengths and areas to improve. The school development plan generally contains suitable information about the school and its priorities for improvement. However, it is not always clear how leaders will judge the progress that they are making on addressing these priorities.

The school has a good track record in making improvements. For example, teachers have recently enhanced how they teach a wider range of writing genres. Leaders have also improved provision for ICT and supported the school council in responding to parental suggestions about changes in lunch choices.

The headteacher manages suitable annual appraisal arrangements that contribute well to improving staff performance. However, there is a limited range of opportunities for staff professional learning.

The school has an appropriate number of well-qualified and experienced staff. Leaders deploy them carefully to provide pupils with a high level of support during lessons, as well as to develop pupils' talents in a range of enrichment activities.

The business manager operates the school's finances prudently to facilitate the school's priorities for improvement. The school has a valuable range of resources that support teaching and learning effectively. It makes good use of its indoor and outdoor spaces to provide beneficial accommodation and learning spaces for pupils. The very recently opened school extension provides pupils with high quality additional learning areas for music, drama and sport. This facility supports pupils' physical, social and emotional wellbeing particularly well.

The school meets all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

## 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))

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.

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

<b>Excellent</b>	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 163 of the Education Act 2002. The main purpose of inspection under this section is to report on compliance with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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:

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