



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

**Ysgol y Llys
Princes Avenue
Prestatyn
Denbighshire
LL19 8RW**

Date of inspection: December 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.

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Context

Ysgol y Llys is a designated Welsh-medium school, and is maintained by Denbighshire education authority. It is situated in Prestatyn. The school serves the town and nearby areas. The school admits pupils from the full ability range.

The school provides education for pupils aged between three and 11 years. Children are admitted to the school's nursery class part-time in the September following their third birthday and full-time to the reception class in the September following their fourth birthday. Teaching is mainly through the medium of Welsh; during the inspection, there were 303 pupils on roll. They are taught by ten full-time teachers and six part-time teachers.

Most pupils who come to the school are considered to be from backgrounds that are neither disadvantaged nor prosperous. About 10% of pupils come from a disadvantaged area. About 10% of pupils come from homes where Welsh is spoken. There are a very few children from an ethnic minority group at the school.

The percentage of pupils (10.5%) who are entitled to free school meals is lower than the average for Denbighshire and Wales. Fifty-five (21%) pupils are on the school's additional learning needs register. These figures are close to the percentages for the county and Wales.

The headteacher has been in post since October 2007 and the deputy headteacher since January 2008.

The individual school budget per pupil for Ysgol y Llys in 2012-2013 is £3,631. The maximum per pupil in primary schools in Denbighshire is £9,659 and the minimum is £3,064. Ysgol y Llys is 42nd out of the 52 primary schools in Denbighshire in terms of the school budget per pupil.

Summary

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

Current performance

Ysgol y Llys' performance is good because:

- most pupils make progress and achieve well;
- the quality of pupils' oral work in Welsh across the school is very good, considering their starting point;
- levels of attendance and behaviour are high and almost all pupils are enthusiastic and eager to learn;
- rich and stimulating learning experiences and effective teaching motivate nearly all pupils to learn and take pride in their Welshness;
- there is a family ethos that is very caring and welcoming, in which pupils feel safe and happy and are treated with respect; and
- the excellent support and guidance contribute significantly to pupils' wellbeing and have a very positive effect on learning.

Prospects for improvement

Prospects for improvement are good because:

- the headteacher has a clear vision, based on promoting Welshness and children's wellbeing, that has been conveyed successfully to staff, pupils, parents and governors;
- all members of staff work as a team and understand their role in implementing the school's plans;
- effective self-evaluation arrangements identify suitable priorities that place a clear emphasis on raising standards; and
- effective co-operation with a range of partnerships has a positive effect on pupils' wellbeing and achievement.

Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards of extended writing across the curriculum in Welsh in key stage 2
- R2 Ensure learning activities that will extend pupils of all abilities fully
- R3 Ensure consistency in assessment for learning practice by ensuring that pupils take a more active part when evaluating their work and setting targets for improvement
- R4 Ensure that self-evaluation arrangements are more analytical in relation to the effectiveness of the school's systems and strategies

What happens next?

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will invite the school to prepare a written case study that describes the excellent practice that was seen during the inspection.

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?	Good
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Standards: Good

In lessons and over time, most pupils at Ysgol y Llys make good progress in relation to their ability and previous performance. Pupils across the school concentrate well, recall their previous learning and show a good knowledge and understanding of what they have learnt in several subjects. Most of them use their skills confidently across a range of subjects. Pupils who have special educational needs make very good progress. In some aspects of their work, pupils of higher ability do not achieve as well as they could.

The quality of pupils' oral work in Welsh across the school is very good, considering their starting point. Pupils across the school listen attentively to their teachers and most of them are very willing to offer answers and share ideas in a variety of situations. The oral skills of pupils who come from non-Welsh speaking homes develop very quickly and, by the end of the Foundation Phase, the responses of many of them are extended. Most pupils across the school use Welsh consistently in formal and informal situations. The English oral skills of most key stage 2 pupils are good. By the end of their time at the school, nearly all are confident in both languages.

Nearly all make good progress in their Welsh reading skills, are interested in books and are developing to become independent readers. In the Foundation Phase, most pupils read increasingly confidently and accurately using appropriate strategies when reading unfamiliar words. Many read aloud with clear expression. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils read a wide range of texts with fluency, and react meaningfully to the text. They use their reading skills effectively to glean information and to present it in an interesting way. Most pupils in key stage 2 use their English reading skills effectively across a range of subjects. Many older pupils use their English reading skills effectively to glean information by using their translanguaging skills in a skilful way to present it.

In the Foundation Phase, most pupils write meaningfully and independently. They use suitable and interesting vocabulary, and begin to vary sentences and punctuate correctly. By the end of key stage 2, many show a strong awareness of different forms of writing and use these features confidently for a number of purposes. Most pupils' work shows good standards of language accuracy in Welsh. The standard of extended writing of the best pupils is of high quality. However, examples of extended work across the curriculum are inconsistent. The quality of most pupils' written work in English is good.

At the end of the Foundation Phase, the percentage of seven-year-old pupils who achieved at the expected outcome (outcome 5) or higher in 2012 was higher than the average for the whole of Wales and among the highest in the family of similar schools. The percentage of pupils who achieved higher than expected (outcome 6) was also higher than the average for Wales and is the highest in the family. The

percentage of pupils who achieved higher than expected was among the 25% highest, compared with performance levels in schools that have similar levels of entitlement to free school meals.

In key stage 2 in 2012, the school's performance in the core subject indicator was higher than the average for the whole of Wales and was among the highest in the family of similar schools. Over a period of four years, it has been consistently higher than the average for Wales and apart from 2009-2010 it has also been higher than the averages for schools in the family. In general, over the same period, the school's performance has placed the school among the top 50% of schools that have similar levels of entitlement to free school meals.

In general, the percentage of pupils who achieved level 5 or higher at the end of key stage 2 has been lower than the averages for the family and Wales in the four core subjects over a period of four years.

There is no significant gap between the achievements of boys and girls, except for the higher levels in Welsh in key stage 2.

Wellbeing: Excellent

Nearly all pupils state that they feel safe and receive good quality support at school. Most of them have an excellent understanding of the importance of eating healthily and keeping fit.

Attendance levels are consistently higher than the averages for the family and Wales and are among the top 25% in comparison with those of schools that have similar levels of entitlement to free school meals.

Standards of behaviour are very high and all pupils across the school are polite and courteous. They show respect and care for their peers, and work happily and conscientiously together from an early age. Across the school, the levels of interest, enthusiasm and commitment of almost all are good and often excellent. The way in which Foundation Phase pupils contribute intelligently to what they are learning and discuss maturely how to improve their work is especially good. These skills continue to develop in key stage 2.

Members of the School Council and the Green Group are very enthusiastic and understand that they are representing the viewpoints of other pupils in the school community. Pupils show obvious pride in their contribution to a number of aspects of developing the school. A particular example of this is their key role in developing the anti-bullying strategy and their prominent part in the appointment of the Children's Officer. The way in which the Criw Caredig in the Foundation Phase undertakes its responsibilities is also an excellent example of the children taking responsibility successfully.

By taking part very enthusiastically in several community activities, pupils develop to be full and responsible members of their community and take pride in their Welshness.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Excellent

Learning experiences: Excellent

The school provides a wide range of stimulating and interesting learning experiences within and outside the classroom that meet the needs of most pupils. Provision in the Foundation Phase is excellent and responds to the needs of all pupils very effectively. Particularly good aspects of provision are the innovative arrangement that is made by dividing learning areas between the three classes as well as the progressive use that is made of the outdoor area, including the forest that is in the school's grounds.

There is effective planning across the school for developing communication, numeracy and information technology skills. Provision for developing the Welsh language is of a very high standard. By creating an extremely positive ethos and constant promotion by the whole staff, the provision gains the interest and enthusiasm of all pupils for the language. The constant, effective emphasis on ensuring very high quality of pupils' oral work is a strong feature of the school's work. Provision for the Welsh dimension is excellent. The valuable experiences are reinforced very effectively by colourful, stimulating displays that motivate pupils to know more about Wales today in addition to its heritage and history.

Pupils benefit from the wide and interesting range of activities to develop their awareness of sustainability issues. Very good opportunities are given to pupils to develop their awareness and expand their knowledge of other parts of the world and of other cultures. Various links with other European schools under the Comenius scheme, as well as regular visitors from abroad, are a very effective way of widening pupils' horizons and developing their understanding of differences between cultures and customs.

Teaching: Good

The quality of teaching is consistently good and teachers use a wide range of strategies to present lively and interesting lessons. Activities are planned in detail and appropriately and there are opportunities for pupils to discuss and express an opinion. A wide range of learning resources are used thoughtfully in order to gain interest and stimulate learning. Across the school, effective use is made of questioning in order to extend pupils' thinking skills and expand their knowledge and understanding.

In the few lessons in which there is excellence, core attention is given to developing key skills and very effective use is made of thinking strategies. In the few lessons in which teaching is less effective, learning outcomes are not always clear to pupils and there is not enough of a challenge for pupils of higher ability.

In all classes, there is a close relationship between adults and pupils and very good behaviour is encouraged in a positive and constructive way. Support staff are used effectively in order to give good support to pupils.

Assessment arrangements in the Foundation Phase are very robust and the information is used effectively to feed into the plans. In key stage 2, a variety of tests are used effectively in order to target appropriate intervention for pupils who need

support. Assessment for learning has begun to develop but the process has not yet been established fully throughout the school. Pupils' work is marked regularly and offers relevant constructive comments. The role of pupils in the process of setting targets and improving their work has not been established consistently throughout the school.

Pupils' annual reports are clear and useful and they are appreciated by parents.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The quality of care, support and guidance has a very positive effect on pupils' standards and wellbeing. Provision for developing pupils' understanding of the importance of eating healthily and how to be safe is of a very high quality. The school offers regular and numerous opportunities to pupils to be physically healthy to promote fitness. A particular feature of the provision is the Wellbeing Group, which offers support and guidance of a high quality to pupils who have emotional needs.

The school has very strong and supportive links with a number of specialist services and external agencies that ensure support and guidance of a very high quality to pupils and parents. The provision for promoting pupils' moral, social, spiritual and cultural develop is extremely effective. This is reflected in the respect that they show for each other and for adults. Positive relationships lead to very good behaviour by all pupils.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and they are not a cause for concern.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is excellent and enables them to make very good progress. The school co-ordinates its wide range of provision excellently. Teachers identify any additional learning needs at an early stage and monitor pupils' progress regularly and very effectively. Staff and the co-ordinator ensure that individual education plans are detailed and thorough and include parents' opinion. The way in which the school arranges training for members of staff and the provision that arises from it is excellent.

Learning environment: Excellent

An exceptional feature of the school is the family ethos that exists. It is a very inclusive and caring community in which pupils feel happy and safe and they work together and with adults very effectively. A particular feature of the school is the staff and pupils' pride in their Welshness.

Prominent emphasis is placed upon ensuring equal opportunities and full access to a wide curriculum for all pupils. Respect for diversity and racial equality is promoted through a variety of work to study foreign countries.

Displays in the classrooms, and across the school, reflect the pupils' work and the school's wider activities. The school provides a good range of learning resources that match pupils' needs and interests well. All resources are used very appropriately in order to enrich learning and teaching, including considerable investment in information and communication technology.

The quality of the site is very good. It is maintained well and offers a stimulating environment that promotes successful learning. The outdoor learning areas have been developed in an innovative way in order to make very effective use of the space available and to improve learning and play experiences.

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

The headteacher has a clear vision that is based on promoting Welshness and on ensuring high standards and children's wellbeing. The headteacher has conveyed that vision successfully to staff, pupils, parents and governors. He leads the whole school staff effectively and has restructured the senior management team successfully in order to ensure consistent leadership for the four units. As a result, this has strengthened the feeling of working as a team, and strategic planning focuses more specifically on improving the quality of provision and on raising standards.

Governors are very supportive of the school's work, and are aware of their responsibilities. Members of the governing body visit the school regularly, and play an appropriate role in managing the headteacher's performance. They are developing an understanding of performance data, in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The role of the body as a critical friend is developing well.

Appropriate attention is paid to national priorities. The Foundation Phase has been established very successfully. Welsh reading skills have been targeted recently, leading to a significant rise in standards. The school has improved its provision for wellbeing by forming a wellbeing group for those few pupils who have behavioural and emotional problems.

Improving quality: Good

The school knows its strengths and the areas that need to be improved well. The senior management team analyses performance data in detail in order to identify pupils who are underperforming and those who are more able and talented. This enables the school to ensure appropriate support for them. Subject co-ordinators contribute effectively to the process through creating comprehensive reports on the quality of provision in their subjects. There are appropriate arrangements for considering parents' and pupils' opinions. All this, in addition to observing lessons, contributes effectively to the self-evaluation report that offers a balanced, accurate picture of the school. However, it is not always analytical enough in relation to the effectiveness of the school's systems and strategies.

Teachers discuss all the outcomes of the self-evaluation process thoroughly in order to prioritise the improvement plans. There is a clear link between these priorities and the targets in the school development plan. Although there are a considerable number of priorities, the greatest emphasis is placed on those that deal with raising standards.

The network of professional practice within the school, in addition to the links that have been created with other schools, is making an important contribution towards developing the provision and raising standards further. The school has benefited

from a professional learning community, which includes teachers in the Foundation Phase and teachers from another primary school and the secondary school. The effect of the work to develop strategies for polishing language patterns in Welsh can be seen clearly in the high standard of pupils' spoken language. The school also plays a prominent part in an innovative forum for six designated Welsh language schools that stimulates change in planning the curriculum and sharing expertise.

Partnership working: Good

The school works effectively with a range of partners. This has a positive effect on pupils' wellbeing and attainment. There is a strong and collaborative relationship between the school and teachers. The quality of communication on information evenings enables parents to play an active part in their children's education.

The school works closely with the Cylch Meithrin that is on the site and this ensures that children settle in quickly at the school. Arrangements for transferring pupils to the secondary school are suitable and prepare older pupils well for the next stage in their education.

The school works effectively with schools in the catchment area, which results in enriching provision. Joint standardisation and moderation have empowered assessment work effectively.

There is a good relationship with external agencies and the local authority. A good example of this is the Welsh lessons for adults that are offered weekly at the school.

There is a strong relationship with the local community. Pupils' contribution to community activities, along with the large number of visitors that come to the school, enrich learning experiences. It also promotes effectively their feeling of community importance and their pride in their Welshness.

Resource management: Good

The school manages its resources effectively. There are enough teaching staff and experienced support staff to deal with every aspect of the school's work.

Provision for teachers' planning, preparation and assessment is organised well, and teachers use these opportunities effectively. The school has an appropriate system for performance management that offers valuable opportunities for the whole staff's continuous professional development.

There are enough resources of good quality in order to meet the needs of pupils and the building and grounds are used to their full potential.

The school's expenditure is planned carefully according to the school's priorities. The headteacher and governors monitor the budget effectively.

Considering the good outcomes in the school, the school offers good value for money.

Appendix 1

Commentary on performance data

The percentage of seven-year-old pupils who achieved the Foundation Phase indicator (the percentage of pupils who achieve the expected outcome (outcome 5) or higher in language, literacy and communication, mathematical development and personal and social development skills) in combination in 2012 was higher than the all-Wales average and among the highest in the family of similar schools. The school's performance, compared with that of schools with similar levels of entitlement to free school meals, was among the top 50% in Wales.

The percentage of pupils who achieved higher than expected (outcome 6) or higher was also higher than the average for the whole of Wales and was the highest in the family. Compared with performance levels of schools that have similar levels of entitlement to free school meals, the percentage of pupils who achieved higher than expected was above the top 25% in language skills and personal and social development.

In general, girls performed better than boys apart from in their mathematical development where more boys achieved the higher outcome. The gap is not significant.

As this is the first year of publishing Foundation Phase data, there is no information about trends available.

In key stage 2 in 2012, the school's performance in the core subject indicator (the percentage of pupils who attained level 4 in a combination of Welsh or English, mathematics and science) was higher than the average for the whole of Wales and among the highest in the family of similar schools. Over a period of four years, it has been consistently higher than the average for Wales. Except for 2009-2010 it has also been higher than the averages for schools in the family. Compared with that of schools with similar levels of entitlement to free school meals, the school's performance was among the top 50% in 2012. The school's performance was among the top 50% in two of the three previous years.

In 2012, the percentage of pupils who achieved the expected level (level 4) in English and mathematics was higher than the average for the family and the average for Wales. The percentage of pupils who achieved the expected level in science was higher than the average for the whole of Wales but lower than the averages for the family. The average for pupils who attained the expected level in Welsh was lower than the averages for the family and the whole of Wales. In general, over time, the percentage of pupils who attained the expected level in the four subjects has been close to or higher than the averages of the family and for Wales.

In comparison with that of schools with similar levels of entitlement to free school meals, the school's performance has varied during the period. It was among the top 50% in two of these years.

The percentage of pupils who attained the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics in combination has been consistently higher than the averages for the family and for Wales over a period of four years.

In 2012, the percentage of pupils who achieved level 5 or higher at the end of key stage 2 was lower than the averages for the family and for Wales in the four core subjects. Over a period of four years, except for English in 2008-2009 and 2010-2011 and science in 2008-2009, the percentage of pupils who attained the higher level has been lower than the average figures for the family of schools and Wales.

In general, over a period of four years, girls have achieved better than boys. The gap is not significant except for in Welsh where there was a considerable gap between boys and girls in 2012.

Although the performance of pupils who are entitled to free school meals has been lower than the remainder over time, the difference is not significant.

Appendix 2

Stakeholder satisfaction report

Responses to parent questionnaires

Sixty-one completed questionnaires were received from parents/carers. The responses give a positive picture that is close to or higher than the average for primary schools for all aspects.

Nearly all parents indicated that they are satisfied with the school in general and that their child likes the school. Nearly all agree that their children are making good progress at school and most say that additional appropriate support is available as necessary. All pupils agree that their child is encouraged to be healthy and to take regular physical exercise. They also all agree that staff expect their child to work hard and to do his/her best. They are all of the opinion there is a variety of activities, including trips and visits. Nearly all agree that homework builds well on what is learnt at school. Most agree that they receive regular information about their child's progress.

Most parents agree that the school is run well and they feel comfortable in raising any issue. Nearly all understand the school's complaints system.

Responses to learner questionnaires

Learner questionnaires were completed by 126 pupils in key stage 2. The responses are positive and close to or higher than the national average for most aspects.

All pupils feel safe at school and almost all know to whom to turn or whom to ask for advice. Nearly all say that they are doing well at school and that teachers or other

adults help them to learn and make progress. In addition, nearly all agree that the school teaches them how to keep healthy and that there are many opportunities to undertake regular physical exercise. Nearly all say that there are enough books, equipment and computers for them and that homework helps them to understand and do their work. Most say that the school deals well with any bullying. However, a minority do not agree that other children behave well and that they can do their work, which is a little higher than the national average.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Goronwy Morris	Reporting Inspector
Hazel Hughes	Team Inspector
Rhiannon Harris	Team Inspector
Eirian Youngman	Lay Inspector
Siwan Tecwyn Jones	Peer Inspector
Dyfan Phillips	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. If it is available, the data report can be seen on our website, alongside this report.

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

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.