

A report on

Myddelton College

**Peakes Lane
Denbigh
LL16 3EN**

Date of inspection: June 2025

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Myddelton College

Name of provider	Myddelton College
Proprietor status	IQ Education Limited, a private limited company
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent all age
Residential provision?	Yes
Number of pupils on roll	281
Pupils of statutory school age	206
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/03/2019
Start date of inspection	02/06/2025

School context:

Myddleton College is a co-educational independent boarding and day school for pupils from 4 to 18 years, located in Denbigh, North Wales. The school was founded in September 2016 and is administered by IQ Education Limited, a company that has another school in England and links to several schools in China.

There are currently 281 pupils in the school. These include 55 pupils in the primary section and 226 in the senior section, including 65 in the sixth form. Currently around 20% of the school's pupils are boarders who are drawn from number of different nationalities.

About 20% of pupils speak English as an additional language. A very few pupils speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard. The school does not aim to make pupils bilingual in English and Welsh, but offers opportunities for pupils in the school to study Welsh second language.

The school recognises around 20% of pupils as requiring individual learning support. This is mainly to support pupils with dyslexia and a range of other mild learning

difficulties such as autism spectrum condition (ASC). The school makes reasonable adjustments to support a very few pupils with medical and/or physical impairments.

Pupils are not selected by ability. The 'pillars' of the school are scholarship, fellowship and resilience. The school is part of a national network of schools recognised for their use of educational technology. All pupils have access to their own tablet device to support their learning.

The current headteacher joined the school at short notice in September 2024.

Summary

Myddelton College fosters a nurturing, inclusive culture in which pupils quickly develop a sense of belonging and pride. Pupils and families value the college's strong sense of community, where individuals are known, respected and supported well. Emotional and social development is prioritised through initiatives such as the well-being room and the 'secret garden', and pupil voice is promoted through elected leadership roles. School and well-being councils have played a significant role in driving improvements, notably in well-being provision. Heads of school and pupil leaders articulate a strong sense of moral purpose, focusing on raising awareness of key social issues alongside charitable work.

A new headteacher joined the school in September 2024 and, along with senior leaders, is building a culture of openness, honesty and accountability. Leader's self-evaluations are reflective and accurate, and a revised advisory committee structure is in place to provide school leaders a 'critical ear'. Four strategic improvement objectives are being pursued with energy, although their alignment to the most urgent pupil needs requires sharpening.

The curriculum is broad and enriched by extensive co-curricular opportunities, especially the 'Learning through the outdoors' (LTTO) programme. Through LTTO, pupils develop resilience, confidence and practical problem-solving skills, supporting their academic and personal development.

The preparatory school is a vibrant learning environment where skilled and collaborative teachers deliver a well-planned, engaging and enriched curriculum. Most pupils make rapid progress in reading, writing, oracy, and independence, supported by effective behaviour management, individualised feedback, and positive professional relationships. Classrooms are purposeful and engaging, with pupils demonstrating high levels of confidence, enthusiasm, and independence.

Teaching in the senior school is underpinned by secure subject knowledge and a clear understanding of examination expectations. Where teaching is strongest, lessons include varied and engaging activities, effective questioning, and meaningful verbal feedback that supports progress. In a minority of lessons, teaching is overly directive and does not adapt in response to pupils' learning, limiting opportunities for pupil progress. Throughout the senior school positive relationships underpin learning. Nearly all pupils exhibit strong oracy, digital literacy and collaboration skills, and across Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 in particular, many pupils demonstrate strong subject specific knowledge and skills. Whilst assessment data is systematically gathered and used to report to parents, the day-to-day use of formative assessment remains inconsistent throughout the senior school.

The school complies fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

Main evaluation

Myddelton connects

Myddelton College is a welcoming, inclusive and nurturing environment in which pupils flourish emotionally and socially. On joining the college, nearly all pupils rapidly develop a strong sense of belonging. They feel valued and known as individuals. Nearly all pupils and their families appreciate the strong sense of community. Pupils are proud to be part of the college.

Leaders have a strong focus on pupil well-being and empower pupils to take responsibility for themselves. Throughout the college there is a calm atmosphere and high levels of mutual respect.

Pupil leaders, appointed from a competitive application and interview process, are proud to represent their peers. Pupil leadership groups have successfully influenced leaders to implement several initiatives, such as the creation of a well-being room and improved access to specialist well-being staff. Further, external areas such as the 'secret garden' have been developed to support pupils' mental health and well-being.

Across the school, pupils routinely participate in activities to raise awareness of, or money for, a range of charities and worthy causes. For example, during the past academic year the school has raised a significant amount of money for a national guide dog charity, a shoebox appeal in support of a charity for homelessness and organised activities and events to support children's charities. Pupil leaders speak most passionately about raising awareness of topical, cultural or moral issues rather than just 'raising money'. They keenly demonstrate a belief that influencing people's thoughts is the most powerful component of meaningful and lasting positive change.

Nearly all pupils feel safe and happy at school. They trust their teachers and feel that they always have someone to speak to if they ever feel worried or sad.

Leaders are developing a sound culture of safeguarding at the school. There are robust arrangements for recording and following up when pupils are absent. There is a well-understood system to report safeguarding concerns relating to pupils. However, not all staff know to whom they should report to if they have concerns about the headteacher. The school has thorough safer recruitment procedures and ensures that all new members of staff receive safeguarding training during their induction. A few issues relating to policies were raised with the school ahead of inspection. These were successfully addressed.

Leadership: strategic direction and self-evaluation

Leaders across the school are clearly committed to pupils' well-being and achievement. Since joining in September 2024, the headteacher has swiftly evaluated and reflected upon a broad range of the school's work and holds an honest view of its strengths and areas for development. Leaders at all levels discuss these openly, helping to foster a culture of accountability.

Since 2022, the advisory committee has acted as a critical friend and accurately identified areas for improvement. However, its impact on tangible school improvement has historically been limited. A new advisory committee was introduced in September 2024 to provide operational oversight. These arrangements are still embedding and their impact is yet to be seen.

Leaders have set four strategic improvement objectives and begun implementing related actions with enthusiasm. While generally appropriate, strategic improvements are not always sharply aligned to pupils' most pressing needs. As a result, the sequencing and prioritisation of actions may not maximise the impact upon pupil outcomes in the short- to medium-term.

Leadership: operational

Leaders are implementing new arrangements for staff development and performance management. The senior leadership team (SLT) is leading a professional development programme that promotes dialogue around teaching and learning. Staff benefit from external training in areas such as safeguarding and curriculum changes, while cross-faculty working groups focus on strategic priorities like EAL provision. However, this work is in its early stages and its impact is not yet evident.

A new quality assurance programme is helping leaders build a clearer understanding of education quality and make timely, sometimes difficult, decisions. This reflects a clear intention to raise standards.

Effective information-sharing systems, such as one-page profiles and progress logs, help teachers understand pupils' needs. This is particularly strong in the preparatory school, where staff use pastoral and progress data well to inform and adapt their planning.

Leaders have also introduced a suitable system to collate assessment data. Although newly established, analysis and dissemination processes are thorough. Staff have a sound understanding of pupil attainment at reporting points. However, the use of ongoing assessment between tests is inconsistent, which may limit pupils' progress.

The Preparatory School (Prep and Pre-prep); teaching, learning and pupil experience

Preparatory school teaching staff are a highly collaborative, coherent team whose work is underpinned by a clear shared purpose. They know their pupils very well, and are adept at meeting their needs, adapting planning and resources in response to their pupils and their progress. The curriculum is broad and balanced and, in combination with detailed, coherent teacher planning, is effective at fostering the progressive development of knowledge and skills.

In the preparatory school, nearly all teachers are highly effective managers of classroom behaviour. Their lessons are characterised by engaging, challenging activities; well-established routines; and secure, trusting relationships. As a result, preparatory classrooms are energised, welcoming environments where an atmosphere of endeavour and ambition prevails.

Nearly all teachers provide pupils with highly effective models of language and behaviour. As a result, they build strong working relationships based on trust and respect.

In the course of their practice, preparatory teachers rapidly develop detailed knowledge of the attainment and progress of individual pupils. During lessons, nearly all teachers use a considered blend of closed and open questions effectively to develop pupils' understanding and encourage thought and independence. Teachers' skilful use of both verbal and written feedback clearly communicates to pupils that the outcomes of all their efforts are valued, whether they be spoken, written, creative or physical. Further, skilful use of individualised targets fosters a culture of continuous improvement and ambition, in which nearly all pupils know what they need to do to improve.

As they progress through the preparatory school, nearly all pupils develop their reading skills appropriately. When reading aloud, nearly all reception pupils can use phonics to sound out words and use context to identify unfamiliar printed words. They combine words successfully into short sentences which they read aloud. Nearly all Year 1 pupils use their reading skills successfully to extract facts and meaning from printed materials, for example identifying different habitats and matching these to animals. Nearly all older pupils can read fluently to extract information in response to questions, such as 'why was Owain Glyndwr famous?' When reading aloud, many read confidently and fluently, adapting tone and pace in response to text and audience.

Nearly all pupils make rapid progress with their writing over their time in the preparatory school. Nearly all younger pupils write accurately in extended sentences. A few Year 3 pupils write with clarity and fluency, forming clear, meaningful sentences that synthesise and summarise information extracted from sources. By Year 5 and 6, many pupils use their writing skills effectively to craft clear, accurate extended texts.

Many older preparatory pupils have highly developed conversational oracy skills. They ask for help and guidance when needed, using polite, confident, clear questions. Nearly all preparatory pupils have oracy skills appropriate to their age and stage, with a few having very advanced skills, using their extensive vocabularies to accurately and clearly convey meaning. Many are confident speaking to guests, and answer questions in a thoughtful, reflective manner.

Over their time in the preparatory school, nearly all pupils make rapid progress in their independence and self-management skills. By the time they reach Years 2 and 3, nearly all pupils manage themselves, their equipment and their workspaces highly effectively.

Many pupils throughout the preparatory school display highly positive attitudes to learning, listening attentively to their teachers, and showing enthusiasm for activities.

The Senior school; teaching, learning and pupil experience

Many teachers in the senior school have a secure subject knowledge and thorough understanding of examination board requirements. They build strong positive relationships with pupils, whom they know well. Most teachers expect high standards for behaviour, and where low level disruption does occur, teachers use positive reinforcement effectively to quickly return to a conducive learning atmosphere.

Faculty leaders work closely with teachers to plan lessons that both support and challenge learning using a hybrid approach of traditional and technical tools. Whilst digital tools are firmly embedded across subjects, in a few cases overly prescriptive resources can result in a lack of flexibility. Leaders' self-evaluation has appropriately recognised this and actions are underway to improve this.

Where teaching is strongest, a range of classroom activities that stimulate and motivate learning are used. Teachers use detailed knowledge of pupils' prior attainment and progress to inform their questioning and interactions. Pupils are made accountable through this effective questioning and further verbal feedback helps pupils make progress with activities. As a result, in these lessons, nearly all pupils make rapid, individualised progress. In a few lessons, where support for learning is strongest, teachers give clear, actionable guidance to pupils. For example, in English classes pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) are guided individually with support notes.

In a minority of lessons, teachers do not adapt questioning readily enough in response to pupils' learning, resulting in insufficient pace and challenge. Further, a minority of teaching is overly directive and does not adapt promptly in response to pupils' work.

Many sixth form pupils display high levels of enthusiasm and engagement in their learning. They demonstrate a clear desire to succeed and to develop their understanding. Most demonstrate strong independence, taking ownership of their learning and managing their time outside lessons effectively. For example, many work highly productively in the calm, purposeful, well-resourced library during their private study time.

Many older pupils use their oracy skills highly effectively in a variety of contexts. They are articulate and speak confidently to each other, their teacher and other adults. They are unafraid of using correct, technical vocabulary and are adept at bringing their prior knowledge to bear when developing their ideas and understanding through discussion, for example when discussing the influence of feminism and capitalism on 20th century poetry. However, in a few cases pupils are hindered in their oral contributions due to language difficulties.

Across the senior school, pupils co-operate and work well together, actively listening to each other and other members of the class. Many have clear opinions, can extend their thinking and are confident to evaluate their own work and the work of others. For example, in history and English they carefully consider other pupils' responses before respectfully challenging and developing the discussion further.

When given the opportunity or within the confines of examination questions, most senior school pupils can write at length, form clear arguments and summarise their findings clearly. Many pupils can be creative in their thinking but also apply real-world examples to their work. For example, in computer science pupils demonstrate an understanding of the impact of data protection legislation on them as individuals.

Where opportunities exist, pupils apply numerical skills accurately. For example, in geography pupils accurately produced bar charts from data collected on a recent field trip to show the environmental quality of different areas in Salford Quay.

Nearly all pupils have highly developed digital skills, which they use effectively across the curriculum to support and access their learning. At Key Stage 3 in particular, pupils develop more specific digital skills, including coding and animation. The IT suite, which was newly refurbished in January, provides specialist software, widening the opportunities available to pupils.

Many pupils in the senior school feel well supported in making decisions about their next steps as they move through the school, for example when choosing GCSE subjects. In the sixth form, pupils receive individual guidance related to higher education options and alternative pathways.

Curriculum and enrichment

The school curriculum is broad and balanced. At Key Stage 4 and 5, pupils have a suitable range of choices, which supports pupils' ability to learn in line with their interests and future pathways.

Throughout the school, the curriculum is enriched through an extensive range of co-curricular opportunities and the school's outdoor education programme, known as 'learning through the outdoors'.

Learning through the outdoors (LTTO)

As part of the formal curriculum, including as an optional GCSE and/or Level 3 diploma, pupils across the school have dedicated days where they 'learn through the outdoors'. This includes onsite activities in the outdoor classrooms, where pupils develop confidence, resilience and advanced bushcraft skills. These skills are challenged during offsite activities such as gorge walking and kayaking, and on annual camps where pupils independently navigate survival situations.

Pupils routinely learn to responsibly manage risk, including when using knives and preparing and controlling fires. During these activities pupils demonstrate high levels of independence, managing their equipment successfully and working collaboratively to solve real life problems. As a result of routine exposure to challenge in authentic contexts, pupils at the college relish challenge. On their return to class, pupils use their skills successfully in other contexts to support their learning and personal growth.

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 2024. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The suitability of proprietors and staff

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The provision of information

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence to indicate that the school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Safeguarding

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

Recommendations

We have made two recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1. Clarify and embed consistent approaches to evaluate pupils' progress on an ongoing basis
- R2. Continue to develop and embed planned actions to improve the quality and consistency of teaching across the school

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/carers at the school.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from parent/carers and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and support staff through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors/proprietor(s), leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit lessons and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school had taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body (where appropriate), information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. ‘*most pupils...*’ or ‘*very few pupils...*’. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>)

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 (Wales) Regulations 2024. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework

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

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