



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

A report on

Ysgol Babanod Llanfairfechan

**Ffordd Y Pentref
Llanfairfechan
Conwy
LL33 0PA**

Date of inspection: June 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Babanod Llanfairfechan

Name of provider	Ysgol Babanod Llanfairfechan
Local authority	Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Conwy
Language of the provider	English with significant Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Voluntary Controlled CiW
Number of pupils on roll	120
Pupils of statutory school age	87
Number in nursery classes	33
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 21.3%)	19.9%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 22.2%)	10.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	6.9%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	1.15%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	05/11/2013
Start date of inspection	20/06/2022
Headteacher also leads Ysgol Pant y Rhedyn Junior School in the village.	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Pupils enjoy their time at Ysgol Babanod Llanfairfechan very much. This is because their teachers plan interesting activities for them to do and this makes learning exciting and fun. As a result, most pupils make strong progress and achieve well. Nearly all pupils behave well and show very positive attitudes to learning. They are enthusiastic and eager to try new things. They are curious and confident learners from an early age.

Pupils say that they feel safe, secure, and happy in school. They know that adults in the school care for them and that they can turn to them when they face challenges or have difficulties. Leaders have worked hard to create this calm and nurturing ethos and it plays a key role in ensuring effective learning at the school.

Leaders place a high priority on developing pupils as independent, creative, and ambitious learners. Staff are encouraged to try new approaches to teaching and to develop the range of learning experiences they offer pupils. They listen carefully to what pupils want to learn about and weave their ideas into well planned sequences of lessons that build systematically on pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers plan a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills to support their wider learning. Classrooms and outdoor spaces are productive, active learning environments where pupils enjoy plenty of opportunities to work collaboratively in pairs and small groups.

Leaders work well together and as a team they share responsibilities sensibly. As a result, there is an effective whole school ethos and sense of teamwork where staff feel valued for their contribution. The school is good at identifying the areas of its work that are most effective and those aspects that need to be improved. The governing body plays an important part in the life of the school. Governors support and challenge leaders effectively.

Recommendations

R1 Challenge all pupils to improve their extended writing skills across the curriculum

R2 Improve pupils' spelling

R3 Strengthen the provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make strong progress in their learning. The pandemic has slowed this progress for a minority of pupils, particularly in the development of their Welsh language skills.

Across the school, most pupils are keen to talk to visitors about their learning. Most nursery and reception pupils listen attentively to adults and each other. They talk purposefully during activities and play sessions, for example in the outdoor role-play puppet show and the café. They express their ideas well and speak with enthusiasm, for example when recreating a beach scene following their recent visit to the beach. They listen well to the contributions of others and respond thoughtfully to their ideas. By Year 2, most pupils are confident speakers. They adapt their speech appropriately, according to the situation. Most speak knowledgeably about the need to reduce harmful waste in the sea, using appropriate vocabulary.

At an early stage, most pupils begin to understand the importance of books and develop an enthusiasm for reading. Nursery and reception pupils enjoy listening to stories and retelling them to their friends and adults. They begin to recognise and name a range of sounds and use this knowledge to start to read simple but stage-appropriate texts. By Year 2, many pupils demonstrate a firm understanding of the features of books. They use the front cover to predict what the story might be about and discuss what they think will happen confidently. Many pupils select books independently and read with increasing fluency and understanding. They use their phonic skills effectively to understand unfamiliar words.

From a young age, many pupils show enthusiasm for writing when experimenting with mark making. They go on to write with increasing independence and fluency. Most pupils in the nursery class quickly understand that letters and words convey meaning. They enjoy making marks in sand and 'moon dust' (glitter) and use paint to attempt to write letter sounds. In the reception class, most pupils use their phonic knowledge effectively to write simple sentences linked to their topic work about life on the farm. Over time, most pupils develop a clear understanding of a wide range of different forms of writing. They apply this knowledge well in their own work. By the end of Year 2, many write an increasing range of sentences and develop their ideas effectively, for example when writing a news report about a giant squid spotted off the coast. Many use basic punctuation such as capital letters and full stops with growing accuracy in their writing. However, although many pupils spell high frequency words accurately, there are too many common spelling mistakes in the work of a minority of pupils. Generally, pupils do not write independently and at length to the standard of which they are capable. Regular use of writing templates restricts their writing too much.

Most pupils develop a secure mathematical knowledge. When given the opportunity, they apply their numeracy skills independently across areas of learning. Younger pupils make strong progress with counting, matching, recognising numbers to 10 and identifying number patterns to 20. Many use every day and mathematical language to

talk about their ideas, for instance when pouring different amounts of liquid into various containers. By the end of Year 2, most pupils select and use relevant number facts and mental strategies to solve mathematical problems, for example when using different combinations of money to pay for items in the role-play area. Many pupils collect and record data competently, for instance when creating block graphs to show the different types of rubbish they collected on their visit to the beach. They analyse the data and interpret the results sensibly.

The development of pupils' Welsh language skills has been hampered by missed learning opportunities arising from the pandemic. Nevertheless, reception pupils enjoy singing Welsh songs and copying the teacher's actions to reinforce key vocabulary. Older pupils are beginning to regain confidence in speaking Welsh. Most answer with basic responses during discussions with teachers. Most pupils understand more Welsh than they can speak. These skills, however, are not as advanced as might be expected for their stage of development. Consequently, many pupils do not use their Welsh language skills confidently enough in other areas of the curriculum and around the school.

From an early age, pupils apply their digital skills well in a range of creative contexts to support their wider learning. Reception pupils use digital devices confidently to practise number skills and use a paint program creatively to retell the story of Blodeuwedd. By Year 2, many pupils log on independently to their digital accounts and create pamphlets, for example to record their work on the festival of Divali and to add text to an underwater story. Many demonstrate good data handling skills when recording the different types of litter they found during the beach clean. They record their findings in the form of a bar graph.

Pupils enjoy using their creative and artistic skills. They use a variety of media creatively, for example to create mythical underwater creatures. Most demonstrate good fine motor physical skills, using scissors, glue and paint brushes confidently. By Year 2 most pupils use their creative skills well, for example when painting in the style of Van Gogh after reading the story of 'Katie and the Sunflowers'. They talk enthusiastically about their participation in music sessions using bells to compose simple tunes. Many pupils across the age-group participate enthusiastically and energetically in a wide range of physical activity, including sessions run by coaches from the local rugby club. This has a positive effect on their confidence, their ability to work with others, their fitness and well-being.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school and are confident in the school environment. They are polite and courteous to each other and visitors. They listen carefully to what their friends and teachers say and respond to their ideas considerately. They play co-operatively, take turns, and support each other well, when playing games and socialising at break time.

Nearly all pupils behave well in lessons and move around the school sensibly. They say that they feel safe in school and free from issues of bullying. They feel well supported by staff, know where to turn if they need support and are confident that staff will listen and deal appropriately with any concerns.

Most pupils show very positive attitudes to learning and are enthusiastic and eager to try new things. They are curious and confident learners from an early age. They settle quickly to their tasks in lessons. They follow instructions well and persevere to complete their tasks. Most pupils work collaboratively in pairs, for example when in the role-play areas. This contributes successfully to the ethos of effective learning in the school and has a positive effect on many pupils' progress and well-being. By Year 2, many pupils demonstrate resilience in their learning and use a range of suitable strategies when they find their work difficult.

Nearly all pupils are keen to take part in planning their termly topics. This results in most pupils displaying high levels of interest and engagement in their learning. Pupils, from an early age, are encouraged to reflect on their learning and to share how well they feel they have tackled a task. They respond well to feedback from adults to improve their work and develop their skills further. As a result, many are beginning to develop a good understanding of what they do well and what they need to do to improve their work. However, at times opportunities are missed to challenge pupils to improve their spelling and extended writing skills across the curriculum.

Pupils demonstrate a broad understanding of cultural diversity, for example by learning about different religions. They are beginning to understand some of the ethical issues facing the world, such as the problems caused to the environment by waste and its effect on the oceans and the challenges faced by children affected by war. They clearly explain the impact of polluting sea life with plastics. This work helps pupils to develop as responsible citizens. Pupils are proud of their efforts in support of local charities, such as creating a Christmas hamper for residents of a local care home and supporting the local foodbank. They contribute to an appeal to provide clean toilets for families in Zambia and to the recent appeal in support of families affected by the war in Ukraine. These initiatives have a positive effect on their awareness of the needs of others in their community and the wider world.

Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe when online, for example they know not to share their passwords. Many pupils understand the importance of looking after their own well-being. Nearly all pupils know the importance of keeping healthy and fit. They talk knowledgeably about healthy food choices for snacks and the need to drink water regularly. They recognise 'Go and Woah foods' and how they should be used to design a healthy meal. They appreciate the importance of taking regular exercise, involving themselves actively in a range of activities during the school day.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has a clear vision for learning which aims to inspire and develop independent and confident learners. Across the school, learning experiences promote the school's vision successfully and teachers provide exciting and stimulating experiences for all pupils. They approach curriculum design in a reflective and collaborative way and are active within the local consortium in preparation for the

new Curriculum for Wales. Staff have created imaginative characters, 'Cadi Creadigol, Marc Mynd Amdani, Gwen Gwybodus and Aled ar eich Marciau' to familiarise the pupils with the four purposes of the Curriculum and refer to these regularly during lessons. During their weekly meetings, staff regularly reflect upon the effectiveness of their approach to the curriculum to ensure that it builds systematically upon pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills.

Staff provide opportunities for pupils to learn through cross-curricular themes such as 'Life on the farm' or 'Under the Sea', that engage pupils' interests successfully. They provide valuable opportunities for staff, pupils, and parents to contribute purposefully to the planning. As a result, pupils are becoming increasingly involved in shaping their own learning. Teachers have a thorough understanding of their pupils' needs and provide purposeful tasks that provide pupils with opportunities to make decisions about the level of difficulty of planned activities. for example by choosing 'Tasg Wych, Waw or Anhygoel'.

Teachers plan an effective balance of activities led by staff, and opportunities for pupils to work independently within the class and the outdoor area. Despite the difficulties posed by the site, teachers have made imaginative and creative use of the outdoor spaces to provide a stimulating learning environment. These areas are regularly adapted to enhance the class theme and have a strong impact on the development of pupils' learning and wellbeing, particularly their physical and problem-solving skills. These opportunities to develop independent learning skills provide a sound basis for pupils to make good progress as they move through the school. Both pupils' and adults' contributions are incorporated effectively to create the colourful and stimulating displays, which are evident in the classes and around the school. Staff ensure that pupils' work is attractively displayed. This raises pupils' self-esteem successfully.

All staff establish highly positive working relationships with pupils. This creates a calm working environment and ensures that pupils feel confident to ask questions of adults and request help with their learning. All teachers have good up to date subject knowledge and use a variety of effective teaching methods which motivate pupils to learn. They use questioning well to move pupils' learning forward and support understanding, according to pupils' needs. Support staff work alongside teachers skilfully and contribute effectively to pupils' learning.

Teachers plan a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and digital skills to support their wider learning. They provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills, for example to communicate with the local council regarding the amount of litter on the beach or by writing an underwater story. However, these opportunities do not always secure progression over time in pupils' extended writing and spelling skills. Regular use of writing templates restricts their writing too much. Teachers plan purposeful opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills at an appropriate level across the curriculum, such as when buying and selling items in the role play area. They provide pupils with regular opportunities to develop and apply their digital skills to support their wider learning, for example by recording their activities.

All members of staff ensure that the Welsh language is prominent and visible throughout the school. They introduce Welsh activities such as songs, nursery

rhymes, games, and Urdd activities, which all contribute to enhance the school's Welsh ethos. All adults use Welsh frequently and confidently as part of their lesson delivery. However, the provision does not support pupils to develop their Welsh language skills sufficiently well over time.

Across the school, teachers provide their pupils with effective feedback and intervene sensitively at appropriate times during the lesson to support pupils and to provide effective feedback as they work. They make effective use of initiatives such as 'Sali Seren' to help pupils to better understand what they need to do to complete tasks successfully. Consequently, pupils are beginning to assess their own work using a simple colour code to identify how well they have done and what they need to do to improve their work.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring community, where staff and pupils show a high level of respect for each other. Staff know the pupils, their backgrounds, and the local community very well. They place a high priority on the well-being of pupils and ensure that the school supports a calm and nurturing environment in which pupils feel safe, happy, and cared for. This strong focus on improving pupil well-being is a key aspect of the school's provision and contributes significantly to pupils' happiness and well-being. This has been particularly beneficial during the pandemic.

Over the past two years, leaders maintained a resilient, flexible, and patient approach towards supporting the pupils. This relentless focus on supporting pupils' emotional health and well-being has continued since pupils returned to school and consequently pupils feel comfortable in talking about any personal concerns they have. A notable feature of the school's commitment to pupil well-being is the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP). This provision continued throughout the lockdown periods providing pupils with a wide range of beneficial activities such as sports, cookery and visits to the local library. This ensured that many pupils were able to continue with their learning while also keeping themselves fit and healthy.

Parents appreciate the communication and guidance provided by staff regarding their children's learning and wellbeing. Prior to the pandemic the school arranged regular open mornings when parents could visit school to work alongside their child and discuss with teachers their progress and well-being. This helped parents become more aware of how they could help and support their children at home.

The school has well-developed and effective systems to support pupils with additional learning needs and is preparing well for the transition to the new national additional learning needs arrangements. It has clear processes to identify pupils in need of support, plan interventions and evaluate the impact of this work. As a result, these pupils gain confidence and show renewed enthusiasm towards learning as well as showing a marked improvement in their social skills as they work towards their personal targets. Staff work closely with external agencies such as speech and language staff to provide additional provision and support for specific pupils and to evaluate its impact on learning.

The school's ethos ensures that there are regular opportunities for pupils to explore their spiritual, moral, and social understanding and to find out about the

characteristics of other religions. Teachers regularly identify opportunities for pupils to reflect on important values such as friendship and honesty, by posing questions such as 'What makes a good friend?' Staff provide well-planned opportunities for the pupils to develop their social skills, such as when they contribute to the Christmas service at the Church, or when taking part in community ventures such as a beach cleaning and 'Lighting up Llan' at Christmas.

Staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their creative and imaginative skills such as when making models of sea creatures, or when using digital resources to create images of a character from Welsh mythology such as Blodeuwedd. The range of creative opportunities also enables the pupils to learn extensively about art on a wider scale such as when they create their own colourful paintings of sunflowers based on the work of Vincent van Gogh.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Teachers provide pupils with worthwhile opportunities to learn about making healthy lifestyle choices. They ensure that water is available throughout the day and that fruit is available at playtimes. They provide regular opportunities for pupils to take part in sport and to adopt a positive attitude towards keep fit.

The school has developed solid systems to ensure the safety of pupils. Its safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and give no cause for concern. Staff have a clear understanding on how to make sure pupils are safe and well looked after. Leaders monitor pupils' attendance closely and work well with external partners to engage with pupils and their families to support good rates of attendance.

Leadership and management

The headteacher sets a clear strategic direction for the school. He has a clear vision with an emphasis on children's happiness - 'Trwy chwarae a chwerthin, mae meithrin y plentyn' (Laughter and play nurtures a child). The headteacher is well supported by the assistant headteachers and all staff promote the school's agreed vision and values successfully. They create a happy, caring, and close-knit school where pupils work and play together confidently. The headteacher's efficient and caring leadership through the pandemic has been reassuring for staff, governors, pupils, and parents and has strengthened the school to face future challenges with confidence.

Leaders set high expectations, and they support and challenge staff to meet these successfully. As a result, there is a strong team ethos. All staff work together purposefully to support each other and to bring about school improvement. There is a positive culture of sharing effective foundation phase practice and pedagogy, which is engaging and motivating pupils successfully. This enables staff to plan together to provide rich and stimulating learning opportunities for pupils, both indoors and in the outside areas.

Leaders know the school well. Arrangements to monitor and evaluate the school's work using first-hand evidence, are well embedded and allow leaders to clearly identify aspects of the school's work that are most in need of improvement. Leaders share their observations from monitoring activities and pose key questions for staff and governors to discuss in meetings. These are effective in helping all staff and governors to understand why specific aspects of the school's work need to improve.

The information they collect, whether it be about pupils' progress or attitudes to learning, also helps leaders and governors to evaluate whether any changes the school is making, benefit pupils as intended.

Many of the school's priorities for improvement support local and national priorities well, including implementing the Curriculum for Wales, additional learning needs reform and supporting pupils' well-being. Thoughtful and well-considered planning ensures that the school addresses these priorities successfully. Since returning to school, leaders have identified the need to improve pupils' use of the Welsh language and their extended writing and spelling skills. Short-term and longer-term goals are realistic and focus predominately on pupil outcomes.

Leaders ensure that all staff have regular opportunities to undertake worthwhile professional development and training. They make effective use of strategic partnerships with other local schools to support the professional learning of all staff. This work has a positive impact on many aspects of the school's work, for example encouraging pupils' independence and their capacity to follow their own lines of enquiry, such as learning about life under the sea. Prior to the pandemic staff benefited from visiting European countries to learn about different ways of teaching and supporting pupils' well-being. This, in turn, has had a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning.

Governors are very supportive of the work of the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. They are well informed and have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors meet teachers regularly to discuss aspects of pupils' work and how initiatives impact both on pupils' attitude to learning and in the progress they make. Individual governors visit school during the school day, for example to help in the school garden, supporting the pupils' well-being and to listen to pupils read. This ensures that they can provide an appropriate level of support and challenge to leaders. Governors understand their legal responsibility in respect of promoting pupils' healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders target finances well to cater for pupils' academic and emotional needs, to meet priorities in the school's development plan and to support staff training. They use grants such as the pupil development grant well, to improve vulnerable pupils' literacy and emotional well-being.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body 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, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read 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 a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- 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 has 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, 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

Copies of the report

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

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

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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