



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

**A report on**  
**Ysgol Bro Dinefwr**

**Heol Myrddin  
Ffairfach  
Llandeilo  
Carmarthenshire  
SA19 6PE**

**Date of inspection: September 2024**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh.**

## About Ysgol Bro Dinefwr

Name of provider	Ysgol Bro Dinefwr
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	Bilingual, Category 2
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	1138
Pupils of statutory school age	969
Number in the sixth form	170
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year <i>average</i> <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the secondary sector is 21.1%)</i>	15.6%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the secondary sector is 11.2%)</i>	9.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	26.6%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	03/04/2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	06/02/2017
Start date of inspection	30/09/2024

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

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: [mylocalschool.gov.wales](https://mylocalschool.gov.wales)

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

## Summary

Ysgol Bro Dinefwr is a caring community where staff prioritise pupils' well-being. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop personally and socially through relevant lessons and a wide variety of sporting, creative, musical and performance extra-curricular activities. Most pupils play and socialise together in a civilised manner during break and lunchtimes and are satisfied with the way in which they are treated by staff. The close and supportive relationship between staff and pupils at Canolfan Cothi is a strong feature. Pupils with additional learning needs receive valuable emotional and academic support in the mainstream at Canolfan Barcud and through the stimulating and beneficial outdoor 'Natur' provision.

In a few lessons, pupils make strong and swift progress in their subject skills because of good teaching and careful planning. However, broadly across the school, a majority of pupils make appropriate progress in their subject knowledge and understanding, they do not make as much progress as they could due to shortcomings in teaching. These shortcomings include low expectations, a slow pace to lessons and a lack of tasks that develop pupils' thinking skills and their independence, as well as their literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

The school offers a wide range of courses for pupils in key stage 4 and the sixth form, many of which are available in both languages separately. Leaders' evaluation of the curriculum offer and their strategic planning for any necessary adaptations are in their early stages.

Since his appointment in April 2023, the headteacher has adopted a culture of fairness and respect. He has established a robust line management system and has identified the school's main areas for improvement. However, the roles and responsibilities of some senior leaders are not defined clearly and the school's current procedures for ensuring the quality of its work are not incisive enough to allow them to identify the exact areas that require improvement. Leaders at all levels do not make a close enough link between the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils. Planning for the progressive development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills is underdeveloped.

Governors are passionate about the school and very supportive. Their role as critical friends is developing appropriately. Although leaders seek the views of staff on aspects of the school's work, they do not canvas the opinions of parents and pupils regularly enough to support them in planning improvements.

## Recommendations

We have made 6 recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Improve teaching, paying particular attention to raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and increasing the level of challenge for pupils of all abilities
- R2 Ensure coherent provision to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills
- R3 Sharpen self-evaluation and improvement planning arrangements so that leaders evaluate the school's work according to its impact on pupils' progress and achievement
- R4 Strengthen strategic planning for the curriculum in key stage 4 and the sixth form and whole-school leadership roles and responsibilities
- R5 Improve attendance
- R6 Ensure appropriate management and monitoring of the budget

## What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress about 12 months after the publication of this report.

## Main findings

### Teaching and learning

Many teachers have established regular and organised routines in their lessons which help promote a hardworking and supportive ethos. Attractive and colourful displays in their classroom supports a stimulating learning environment. In many cases, teachers have appropriate expectations in terms of behaviour and this leads to establishing a positive working relationship where many pupils behave well and show respect to their teachers, support staff and peers. Throughout the school, a majority of pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. However, a few teachers do not manage behaviour and engagement effectively enough and this leads to pupils losing interest and concentration, talking to peers or across the teachers and too slow completing tasks. In the few lessons where working relationships between teachers and pupils are strong, and where the quality of teaching is good, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are excellent. In these lessons, pupils are keen to contribute and make swift and sound progress.

Most sixth-form pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They show an interest in their chosen subjects and work effectively with teachers. Many show a strong understanding of previous work and use the correct terminology when answering questions. A few have very high levels of subject understanding and explain complex concepts eloquently.

In many lessons, teachers have sound subject knowledge and are effective language models. They usually reinforce subject terminology appropriately. As a result, a majority of pupils make adequate progress in learning, in the development of their subject skills and understanding in lessons or over time. In a few cases, teachers explain vocabulary regularly and effectively to strengthen pupils' understanding and help them to use this vocabulary in their work. Pupils in these lessons usually make strong progress. They recall previous learning securely and use their knowledge to complete new tasks successfully. Overall, across a majority of subjects, a minority of pupils do not have a firm enough grasp of their previous learning to ensure that they make the expected progress. A minority of pupils do not make the expected progress within lessons and over time. This is due to:

- Shortcomings in teachers' planning
- A lack of challenge in tasks
- Pupils' over-reliance on teachers
- Low expectations of what and how much pupils can achieve in an individual lesson and over time

In line with the school's policy, nearly all teachers plan '*Dechrau da*' starter tasks. While these activities serve to settle pupils into work, teachers spend too much time on them. This hinders pupils from learning new information and moving forward in their learning. The majority of teachers plan a suitable sequence of useful activities that support pupils to learn. They provide appealing resources and plan activities that build skilfully on each other to enable pupils to learn and make sufficient progress. However, in a minority of cases, the nature of the tasks and the pace of lessons do not enable pupils to fulfil their potential and tasks do not provide a suitable level of challenge or support for pupils. In these cases:

- Teachers plan a series of short tasks that keep pupils busy rather than considering what pupils need to know, understand or achieve to ensure progress
- The rate of learning is too slow, where pupils do not work as well as they could or apply themselves to tasks to the best of their ability
- Teachers do not plan carefully enough to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities and needs

Most teachers move around the classroom to check pupils' work and offer them purposeful support. In the best cases, they provide constructive and timely verbal feedback for pupils to improve their work. On the whole, teaching assistants provide pupils with effective support in lessons and work well with teachers.

Many teachers use simple questions effectively to recall basic information at the beginning of lessons. A few teachers question effectively to encourage pupils to think more deeply and develop their responses. In the most effective cases, the teacher questions skilfully and helps pupils to make connections in their learning and, by doing so, stimulates pupils' previous knowledge and understanding purposefully. However, the majority of teachers do not question extensively enough to probe pupils' understanding well enough. In a minority of cases, teachers rely on the same pupils to answer questions or provide pupils with the answers themselves. As a result, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to use or develop their thinking skills or develop their independence.

Recently, departments have begun to develop various methods of assessing pupils' work and providing them with written feedback. A few teachers provide very specific feedback that helps pupils understand how to improve their work. However, there is too much variation within and across the areas of learning and experience in terms of the quality and effect of feedback for pupils. There is also variation in teachers' expectations of pupils' response. As a result, pupils' understanding of that they are doing well and what they need to improve varies. On the whole, very little attention is given to pupils' spelling and grammatical errors. Although, in language lessons, the majority of pupils improve the accuracy of their writing by reviewing and editing, very few pupils make improvements to the quality of their work across the other subjects.

Very recently, the school has implemented a plan to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills. However, planning and evaluation arrangements are not strategic or cohesive enough. As a result, opportunities for pupils to develop progressive literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum are inconsistent and inadequate. In a few subjects, teachers plan rich tasks for pupils to develop their literacy skills. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to talk and work in pairs and groups in literacy tasks across many subjects.

In Welsh lessons, the majority of pupils use suitable and varied vocabulary correctly to express themselves orally and often give extended answers. In English lessons, many pupils contribute confidently in oral tasks and show a good understanding of the topic when answering questions. In other subjects, when they are given an opportunity to do so, a few pupils express themselves eloquently. They give extended answers which include suitable subject vocabulary and give valid reasons for their opinions. In the majority of lessons, only a minority are willing to make oral contributions and they usually give short, undeveloped answers. Only a few pupils are skilful or willing to make oral contributions in modern foreign language lessons.

In Welsh and English lessons, the majority of pupils develop suitable reading skills. They acquire knowledge and ideas from extended reading pieces successfully and, overall, they analyse and interpret meaning and come to valid conclusions. In English, many analyse appropriately how authors create an effective atmosphere and the majority of the older pupils summarise the similarities and differences between two poems skilfully. In Welsh lessons, many pupils use a range of strategies to select and make mature comments on key ideas and themes. Many older and more able pupils use higher-order reading skills effectively to interpret and evaluate meaning confidently, for example when analysing poems and novels. However, in both Welsh and English lessons, when analysing reading passages, a minority of pupils do not develop their answers in full. In other subjects across the curriculum, opportunities for

pupils to develop their reading skills are too varied. Overall, many locate facts successfully and categorise information appropriately. A few pupils highlight information correctly and annotate effectively. Throughout the school, pupils do not practise and develop their higher-order reading skills regularly enough across the subjects.

The majority of pupils present their work and ideas methodically when writing but a minority make basic spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in their work. In English, many pupils write in a variety of genres to suit the audience and purpose of the task, for example when writing a horror story or a formal letter to the First Minister to express their opinion on hunting. In Welsh, many pupils adapt the style and form of their writing to suit the purpose and audience. For example, they write a speech expressing an opinion about changing the Welsh names of local houses and farms using imperative verbs, emotional language and rhetorical questions to create effect. A few pupils write at length effectively across a few areas of the curriculum. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their independent writing skills. Pupils are over-reliant on glossaries and language tables that are available to them. Too often, they do not develop their responses or nor do they produce enough volume of work.

In mathematics lessons, many pupils make secure progress. They plot conversion graphs successfully and use the information to solve a problem. Many pupils understand the order of operations, develop their understanding of how to calculate with different appropriate methods and apply suitable strategies. More able pupils make more sophisticated calculations successfully. Across relevant subjects, the majority of pupils develop their number skills suitably. Many use the four number rules confidently, for example when using a formula to calculate the force of an object in their science lessons. A majority produce a line graph correctly, for example when drawing a graph of speed against stopping distance. However, pupils' progressive development in numeracy skills as they move through the school is limited.

Most pupils use their basic digital skills successfully. However, there are not enough opportunities across the school for pupils to develop and practise advanced digital skills.

In physical education lessons, many pupils develop their physical skills by working together well in team tasks such as running, throwing and kicking a ball within time limits. Many pupils develop valuable creative skills in their art lessons and create 3D sculptures with wire. More able pupils in English lessons develop their creativity effectively, using a variety of literary techniques to strengthen their descriptions of characters such as Mrs Pratchett when studying the novel 'Boy' by Roald Dahl.

The school hosts a learning centre (Canolfan Cothi) for pupils with an autistic spectrum disorder on behalf of the local education authority. The pupils of Canolfan Cothi enjoy school and staff know them well. They are given valuable learning experiences and strong support to develop their academic and social skills. As a result, they generally progress successfully to the next stage in their learning.

The school provides a wide range of academic and vocational courses in key stage 4 and the sixth form which meet the needs of most pupils, including those with additional learning needs. Beneficial support is provided for pupils to help them

consider their future pathways and careers, including valuable work experience opportunities. The school has expanded its curricular offer through beneficial partnerships with local colleges to meet pupils' aspirations. For example, agriculture and practical options such as hairdressing and beauty and construction are offered. A very wide range of optional subjects is provided in both languages in key stage 4 and, to a lesser extent, in the sixth form. However, leaders, including governors, do not review the suitability and cost of the curricular offer closely enough to plan sensible adjustments.

The school has a clear vision for its Curriculum for Wales, which is based on promoting the school's values to develop ambitious, respectful and kind pupils. The school has prioritised opportunities for leaders of the areas of learning and experience to work together to develop new learning plans. Leaders have begun to work with the primary schools in the cluster to ensure a mutual understanding of progress and have established a parents' working group in developing elements of assessment and reporting. However, this is in its early stages.

Through partnerships with external agencies, more able pupils are given a few opportunities to have beneficial experiences, such as visits to universities. A very few advanced subjects are offered, such as GCSE Additional Mathematics. However, there is not a clear enough strategy across the school to support the development of more able pupils, including robust teaching strategies to challenge them.

Arrangements for personal and social education (PSE) are secure. There are valuable opportunities for pupils up to Year 11 to learn about diversity, human rights, ethics, equality and citizenship through weekly PSE lessons. The school has considered the content of these lessons carefully based on pupil questionnaires and key issues that have arisen through the work of pastoral staff. There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to discuss contemporary issues such as rights and to develop political awareness in a few subjects across the curriculum, for example through the 'Ein Senedd Ni' ('Our Senedd') unit of work by the Welsh department. There are a few suitable opportunities for sixth-form pupils to discuss some important issues but there are no consistent arrangements for them.

A wide variety of extra-curricular activities provide opportunities for pupils to develop their subject skills more widely outside the classroom. These include a drama club, various sports clubs, a coding club, a gardening club and overseas trips.

### **Spotlight: Outdoor education that is beneficial for pupils**

As part of curricular developments, staff and pupils have developed an extensive outdoor area which allows pupils to learn outdoors and impact positively on their emotional well-being. The outdoor provision at 'Natur' allows pupils with additional learning needs and a few other pupils to develop useful practical skills, such as planting, outdoor cooking and caring for chickens and goats. They develop their understanding of sustainable farming through valuable learning opportunities, such as making apple crisps or juice. Pupils grow a variety of produce and sell it locally or use it in health and well-being cooking lessons.



## **Well-being, care, support and guidance**

Supporting pupils' well-being and promoting inclusion are strong features at Ysgol Bro Dinefwr. This is reflected in the school's values of 'be respectful, be ambitious, be kind'. The school is a caring community that supports pupils' emotional and social needs well. The learning environments are attractive and are used effectively to encourage positive well-being.

Most pupils are welcoming and polite when greeting visitors, play and socialise in a civilised manner during break and lunchtimes. The well-being team has a comprehensive knowledge of pupils' needs and fosters a close and positive relationship with them. Purposeful support is provided for pupils who need emotional and behavioural support in the 'Behaviour Centre' and, overall, this has an appropriate effect on the well-being and attitudes of these pupils. The school has a suitable reward system which promotes and celebrates pupils' positive behaviour and efforts and this enables pupils to use praise points to purchase goods from the school shop or make a donation to charity.

Staff and governors receive beneficial safeguarding training regularly and they have a good understanding of their roles and how and when to refer any concerns. Leaders use relevant information from a variety of sources effectively to identify vulnerable pupils and ensure that they monitor the well-being of these pupils appropriately. As a result of these robust arrangements, many pupils feel safe and say that they are treated fairly. Most pupils say that they are not bullied.

The school works suitably with pupils who are at risk of being excluded. Where appropriate, it has fostered successful partnerships with external agencies to offer support to these pupils. There are appropriate arrangements to monitor attendance and the school has invested generously in the pastoral teams and its provision to improve attendance. This includes working with external agencies to tackle persistent absences or to support vulnerable families. Between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 academic years, the school's attendance rate fell by more than was seen nationally. There was an increase of 1% in the attendance rate last year compared to the previous year. The attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals has also improved slightly. However, the school's attendance rates continue to be much lower than expected.

Pupils are elected to the School Senedd and the Eco Council and they have had a positive influence on a few aspects, such as organising a school uniform exchange. Members have worked with officers from the education authority to ensure more healthy choices in the canteen. This has led to a project where a local farm grows produce for the school. There are beneficial opportunities for the school's older pupils to lead clubs and volunteer as 'reading buddies'. However, overall, other pupils do not have enough awareness of the work of the Senedd and there are very few opportunities for pupils to influence teaching and learning and the school's decisions. There is no pupil representation on the governing body.

There are extensive opportunities for pupils to develop personally and socially outside lessons. These include a number of clubs such as the knitting club, the friends club and taking part in the school musical, 'Grease'. There are robust

arrangements to support learners when they join the school in Year 7 and this helps them to settle well at the school.

The additional learning needs (ALN) team has appropriate knowledge of the needs of pupils with specific learning difficulties. There are robust procedures for identifying potential needs of any pupil at an early stage through the strong transition process. The school has prepared appropriately to meet the requirements of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act and individual education plans provide detailed information about pupils' needs and include suitable targets. Pupils' one-page profiles include useful information and are shared with staff, but teachers' use of them for planning is too varied. Suitable training is provided to teachers on ways to support pupils with ALN. This develops the staff's understanding of the needs of individual pupils. On the whole, the ALN team co-ordinates provision for pupils with ALN appropriately. There is effective co-operation between the staff in Canolfan Cothi and the Barcud unit in the mainstream for pupils with more complex needs to ensure that support is tailored purposefully. This includes working with the relevant external agencies to ensure planning for the next steps for these pupils. However, quality assurance arrangements for the provision of ALN are undeveloped, which means that leaders do not have a clear strategic overview of the impact of this provision on pupils' standards and progress.

### **Leading and improving**

The headteacher is a passionate leader who is keen to create an inclusive community by providing an opportunity for all pupils to '*esgyn ar adain dysg*' ('soar on the wings of learning'). He professes values of fairness and respect and is a positive role model. Since being appointed headteacher, he has worked diligently to establish systems that focus on developing the ability of leaders, including governors, to drive improvements. However, these changes have not had time to have an impact on important aspects, including the quality of teaching, provision for developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and improving attendance.

The senior leadership team work together to support the headteacher and fulfil their duties. Their responsibilities have been allocated fairly sensibly to take advantage of individuals' expertise. However, the responsibilities of the senior leadership team and other leaders are duplicated or overlap in a few areas, which means that lines of accountability are not clear.

Senior leaders have identified four main improvement priorities which are appropriate, on the whole. However, they have not used the full range of information available to them to identify the exact aspects that need improvement. Planning does not always address the areas for improvement specifically or strategically enough and the expected impact of any actions on pupils' standards and outcomes is not given full consideration. This prevents leaders from measuring success and holding others to account for their work.

The school plans appropriate quality assurance activities. These include lesson observations, learning walks, opportunities to scrutinise work and seeking the views of staff. Leaders are beginning to analyse pupil performance data. Senior leaders use these activities to identify some strengths and areas for improvement, but their

analysis is not detailed enough. There are not enough opportunities for pupils and parents to share their opinions about the school's work.

Recently, the school has strengthened its arrangements to support and challenge middle leaders. Senior leaders provide valuable opportunities for middle leaders to work with them to undertake quality assurance activities. Line management meetings also provide beneficial opportunities to discuss issues such as outcomes and interventions for individual pupils. As a result, middle leaders are developing an appropriate understanding of their roles and many have a suitable knowledge of the strengths and areas for improvement within their area of responsibility. However, leaders at all levels do not place a sharp enough focus on evaluating the impact of provision on learning. Self-evaluation and planning for improvement processes have not had enough effect on important areas such as teaching, provision for skills and improving pupils' attendance.

Leaders have ensured a strong culture of safeguarding and respond well to national priorities, such as developing Curriculum for Wales and mitigating the effect of poverty. There are effective processes to identify vulnerable pupils and they are provided with valuable pastoral and curricular support. Leaders are beginning to consider the effect of this provision on pupils' attainment. The pupil development grant is spent and evaluated suitably.

The headteacher, business manager and governors have detailed knowledge of the school's financial situation and they monitor expenditure regularly. However, the school's budget is in a significant deficit. Although leaders have identified some areas in which savings can be made, they have not addressed this robustly enough, including looking at the cost effectiveness of the curriculum.

Many staff appreciate the opportunities provided for them to develop professionally. These opportunities are normally linked appropriately to the school's priorities. Professional learning communities provide beneficial opportunities for staff to discuss and share resources and practices. There are suitable performance management arrangements for staff at all levels. However, the objectives do not always focus sufficiently on the impact on pupils' standards and experiences.

Governors are very supportive of the headteacher's work and the role of the school within the community. Recently, the appropriateness and quality of the information given to them by leaders has improved and this means that they are better informed about the school's work. Recently, they have identified the need to strengthen their role as critical friends. As a result, they have established a curriculum and standards committee to enable them to challenge the school more effectively. However, it is too early to measure its impact.

## **Additional information**

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are not a cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for the safety of the site are a cause for concern.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors do not manage the school's funding appropriately; the school has a significant financial deficit.

## Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer questionnaires and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers, staff and the governing body/members of the management committee 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, middle 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 a broad sample of lessons, including learning support groups and the specialist resource base (where appropriate), 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 (where appropriate) and in outdoor areas
- visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning (where appropriate)
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs
- 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

## Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report refers 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 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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**This document has been translated by Trosol (Welsh to English).**