



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

A report on
Ysgol Bro Hyddgen
Machynlleth
Powys
SY20 8DR

Date of inspection: November 2024

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Bro Hyddgen

Name of provider	Ysgol Bro Hyddgen
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	All age school
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	424
Pupils of statutory school age	359
Number in the sixth form	43
Number in nursery classes	*
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 all-age sector is 20.2%</i>)	13.6%
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 all-age sector is 8.6%</i>)	18.7%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	40.7%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	25/11/2024

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

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

Summary

Most pupils at Ysgol Bro Hyddgen have very positive attitudes to school life and are proud to be a part of it. Pupils of all ages are extremely polite and respectful towards adults and visitors. They play or socialise together happily during break and lunchtimes and enjoy each other's company. This is an excellent feature.

Staff prioritise pupils' well-being and convey a supportive and caring ethos. As a result, most pupils feel happy at school and are willing to turn to staff for support if necessary. There are robust arrangements to help children in the Reception class settle well at the beginning of their school life and a number of beneficial activities for Year 6 pupils, as well as their peers from other local schools, to prepare them for life in the secondary department. The personal and social education programme includes a good range of learning experiences that support pupils to make healthy decisions in relation to their lifestyle, including how to keep themselves safe online. Continuous attention is given to the importance of attending school regularly with pupils and their families, but attendance levels remain low in comparison with the pre-pandemic period.

Across the age range, many pupils make adequate progress in their knowledge and understanding and a few make strong progress over time. However, as a result of shortcomings in leaders' strategic planning and how teachers plan their lessons and tasks, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. The support given to pupils with additional learning needs is beneficial, including classes in the 'Y Gelli' unit, but provision for more able pupils is not effective enough. The current management arrangements do not allow leaders to gain a comprehensive overview of the continuum in pupils' learning experiences as they move through the school or of whole-school provision to develop their literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

Recently, leaders have placed an appropriate focus on strengthening arrangements for staff to develop professionally and this has had a positive effect on a few important areas, such as the quality of feedback on pupils' work. The school improvement plan, along with improvement plans for specific subject areas, include a number of key areas for development. However, line management processes are not robust enough to enable leaders to hold staff to account for their work.

The condition of the accommodation, site safety and supervision arrangements in the secondary department are a cause for concern. The inspection team's specific concerns were passed on to Powys Local Education Authority and to the governors.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Address the safeguarding issues identified during the inspection
- R2 Improve attendance
- R3 Improve the quality of teaching
- R4 Strengthen strategic leadership and provision for the progressive development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills
- R5 Establish robust and consistent line management arrangements to ensure that leaders hold staff to account for their work and give full consideration to pupils' development in an all-age school
- R6 Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning processes by giving clear attention to the impact of provision on pupils' outcomes, along with the progress they make in their learning and skills

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

The positive working relationships between pupils and teachers at Ysgol Bro Hyddgen are a notable strength. Most teachers have established clear procedures and expectations in terms of behaviour and attitudes to learning, and therefore their pupils behave very well and the respect they show towards staff is commendable.

Many teachers instruct and explain clearly by using relevant terminology. Most pupils listen to them carefully, persevere diligently and concentrate well, even when tasks or explanations go on for too long. In a minority of sessions across the school, pupils are passive because teachers' presentations are too long or because they over-direct learning. Although a majority of pupils recall previous work and remember key vocabulary well, a minority are over-reliant on support from teachers or on information in work booklets or language mats. As a result, they do not develop the independence needed to enable them to take responsibility for their own learning.

In a majority of sessions, positive features in teachers' planning mean that many pupils make adequate progress in their knowledge and understanding. These include the use of helpful learning resources, opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and small groups and purposeful activities that are part of "Expeditions" (alldeithiau) or interesting learning experiences. In a few cases, where teachers are very enthusiastic about their area of learning, give energetic presentations and organise stimulating activities, most pupils make strong progress in their subject knowledge and skills. In these lessons, pupils are given purposeful opportunities to make their own decisions and to develop their thinking skills, imagination and problem-solving skills. In these lessons, teachers have very high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. Despite the high expectations of most teachers in terms of pupils' behaviour and participation in lessons, they do not have the same ambition regarding their achievement and potential, particularly in the secondary department.

Many teachers and teaching assistants provide suitable support and guidance for pupils with learning difficulties or those who are less able but, across the school, the provision for more able pupils is not consistent enough. In a minority of cases across the school, shortcomings in teachers' planning and the organisation of their lessons mean that pupils do not make as much progress as they could.

These shortcomings include:

- Lessons that are slow to get going or lessons where the rate of teaching and learning is too leisurely
- Teachers over-directing and doing too much for pupils
- A lack of variety in tasks over time or a lack of increasing challenge
- A lack of purposeful planning to develop pupils progressively in their knowledge and in their literacy, numeracy and digital skills
- A lack of opportunities for pupils to work independently, develop their thinking skills and solve complex problems
- Insufficient opportunities for pupils to participate orally, guide learning and model their work
- Expectations that are too low in terms of what and how much pupils are able to achieve

Most teachers ask basic and brief questions to check pupils' understanding and recall their previous learning. Only a few teachers ask extended or challenging questions to spark pupils' imagination or curiosity or to lead them to think more deeply. This hinders pupils' progress in their thinking skills, oracy and their ability to solve problems. In a few lessons, pupils are given valuable opportunities to read aloud, show their work, model answers or offer examples of good answers. In general, there is inconsistency in the quality and effectiveness of written feedback on pupils' work both within and across areas and the school. In the best examples, the following can be seen:

- Purposeful use of CIW (*'Cyfle i Wella'*) sheets, where pupils respond appropriately to the teacher's targets
- Beneficial use of the literacy marking code
- Feedback that gives pupils specific guidance on how to improve their work
- Challenging follow-up questions or instructions

- Allocating appropriate time in lessons for pupils to respond and work on what needs to be improved

Too often, targets are set for pupils to improve work but there is a lack of relevant follow-up work or an inconsistent response from pupils to the feedback. In a few cases, teachers' comments on pupils' work are too superficial or overly complimentary. There is inconsistency within and across areas of learning in the way in which teachers draw attention to errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Provision for and pupils' standards in literacy, numeracy and digital competence

Strategic leadership to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital competence skills is not effective enough. It is not co-ordinated closely enough to ensure that pupils make increasing progress in their skills as they move through the school, particularly in their numeracy and digital skills.

In general, opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills are appropriate and there are some good examples of valuable tasks to develop oracy, reading and writing skills across the school. Many of the youngest pupils' oral skills develop suitably. They share ideas confidently during group discussion sessions and use an increasing range of suitable vocabulary. A majority of older pupils express themselves clearly and correctly and use an appropriate range of vocabulary, but their answers are often very brief.

In Welsh lessons, a majority of pupils use and develop increasingly challenging vocabulary and a few convey their ideas eloquently with sophisticated vocabulary. In some subjects, a few pupils in the secondary department discuss complex topics maturely and use rich vocabulary. However, a minority of pupils are reticent and lack the confidence to contribute orally in both languages. They give short responses that have not been developed fully. Most pupils who are learning Welsh as a second language have a positive attitude towards the Welsh language and develop their proficiency in the language securely over time.

Pupils' early reading skills develop suitably and, across the school, pupils develop their basic reading skills soundly. They locate facts and information correctly and develop a good understanding of what they read in terms of meaning and intention. In a very few subjects in the secondary department, pupils develop higher-order reading skills suitably by interpreting meaning, coming to insightful conclusions or deducing the author's meaning or intentions. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their higher-order reading skills.

Most of the youngest pupils' early writing skills develop successfully. For example, they write letters in rice and use clay to form letters. Later on, many create humorous sentences skilfully when researching rhymes and, by Year 6, many develop sound creative writing skills. They use a good range of vocabulary, phrases and idioms to convey feelings such as humour or fear. There are appropriate opportunities to write at length in a minority of subjects other than Welsh and English in the secondary department.

A majority write competently in an appropriate range of genres for a variety of audiences in both languages. Many older pupils write fluently in English and succeed in creating extended pieces independently, for example when analysing war poems. A few have a very good grasp of vocabulary and syntax and use idioms and rhetorical language knowledgeably. In Welsh, many Year 11 pupils create written pieces of a high standard fairly independently.

Many pupils' mathematics skills develop appropriately from an early age. The youngest pupils count confidently up to 10 when using blocks to measure the length of various bones, and pupils in the primary department use their knowledge of number facts confidently in a variety of relevant contexts. By Year 6, many use different calculation methods confidently to present information in charts and graphs to show sales, profit and loss.

The mathematics skills of a majority of pupils in the secondary department develop well. They calculate the area and perimeter of irregular shapes successfully and demonstrate appropriate algebra skills when solving and simplifying equations. Throughout the school, in other relevant subjects, pupils use and apply basic numeracy skills suitably, for example when producing bar graphs, using simple equations and handling data. However, because of shortcomings in planning for the progressive development of numeracy across the curriculum, pupils in the secondary department, particularly the oldest pupils, do not develop and apply their advanced number skills adequately.

Pupils' basic digital skills develop appropriately, on the whole. The youngest pupils are confident when controlling a programmable toy and when using a range of computer programs to present their work. By Year 6, many use spreadsheets confidently to input data and use formulae. Many older pupils use their basic digital skills confidently when presenting information in simple programs. Due to a lack of opportunities, the oldest pupils do not develop their digital skills progressively and opportunities to use a wide range of digital media are limited.

In physical education lessons, most pupils enjoy exercising together and working in groups to develop beneficial physical skills. They develop relevant techniques in touch rugby and netball and agility in their gymnastics lessons and yoga sessions. Across the school, most pupils make sound development in their creative skills in art lessons. They experiment with a variety of techniques and materials and create art pieces of a high standard.

Curriculum

The curriculum across the school includes a number of strengths but the curriculum in key stage 4 does not meet the needs and interests of all pupils. Some subjects are offered which reflect the context of the area and some pupils' aspirations appropriately, such as the agriculture course. The school has expanded its curricular offer for pupils in the sixth form through beneficial partnerships with other schools and providers. For example, pupils take advantage of opportunities to study psychology and politics through the county e-sgol provision.

For younger pupils and those in key stage 3, leaders have developed an interesting curriculum which incorporates the history, culture and heritage of the local area

successfully. Staff have worked effectively with pupils, parents and the wider community to ensure that the school provides learning experiences that engage many pupils' interest and foster a sense of belonging to their 'cynefin' or local area. For example, through the 'Dylife' expedition, pupils have an opportunity to learn about the historical, economic and social background of a small local village that was one famous for its mining. In the 'Dysgu Disglair' lessons, Year 7 pupils are given an opportunity to be active in their learning by developing a project that interests them, for example by creating a website on football skills, learning a new language or creating leather jewellery. Leaders have worked together to create progress maps across the areas of learning and experience. However, they have not given sufficient consideration to progression in learning experiences or pupils' progressive development in their skills and knowledge from the primary phase to the secondary phase.

Pupils' spiritual and moral development is supported effectively through the 'Munud i Feddwl' morning programme, class and plenary assemblies and personal and social education (PSE) lessons. Pupils benefit from a purposeful and comprehensive PSE programme to help them develop personally and socially. Leaders have considered the content of these lessons carefully based on pupil questionnaire data, key issues identified through the work of staff and national priorities.

There are valuable learning opportunities to learn how to be a good friend, about the importance of managing money and the adverse effect that misuse of social media can have on mental health. The school provides good support and guidance to help pupils make informed choices about their next steps.

A few opportunities are provided across some areas of learning and experience to celebrate diversity, challenge prejudice and develop pupils' appreciation of different cultures. However, planning to learn about the history and experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, and developing consideration of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender + people across the areas is not purposeful enough.

There are extensive and worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their subject, sports and performing skills outside the classroom. These include valuable experiences through the Urdd club and cross-country club. Pupils are given beneficial opportunities to represent the school, such as in sports teams, eisteddfodau and at the swimming gala. Older pupils take part in musicals and visit exhibitions at the Arts Centre in the town. Pupils of all ages are given the opportunity to appreciate Welsh language groups performing at 'Gig Maes B Bro Hyddgen', which is an annual music festival organised by the school to promote and celebrate Welsh culture.

Well-being, care, support and guidance

Ysgol Bro Hyddgen is a caring and familial community. Nearly all pupils have a strong sense of belonging to the school community. Most feel safe and free from bullying within a supportive learning community and are polite and treat their peers and visitors with respect and care. Staff promote consistent positive standards of behaviour that nurture pupils' self-discipline successfully. This includes clear rules, rewards and sanctions. The youngest pupils are rewarded weekly in assemblies and

the oldest pupils appreciate gaining praise tickets. As a result, nearly all pupils behave very well in lessons and during break and lunch times.

Staff know the pupils very well and there are strong arrangements to support their emotional, health and social needs. A variety of suitable interventions are organised to support pupils' well-being and relevant staff work well with agencies to offer additional provision, such as art and play therapy. Staff foster a close and supportive relationship with pupils and this ensures that most are comfortable about discussing any concerns with them.

On the whole, through a variety of pupil's voice committees, pupils' leadership skills develop soundly. The youngest pupils are given purposeful opportunities to lead on a wide range of committees. For example, the sports ambassadors lead activities during playtimes to promote fitness in a range of fun sports. Following feedback from pupils, the school council has influenced the menu in the secondary department to ensure that a suitable choice of healthy foods is available.

Most pupils show pride in their school and enjoy socialising in a variety of extra-curricular activities, such as the gardening club and the darts club for the oldest pupils. Sixth-form pupils are valuable ambassadors for the school. They develop as respectful and responsible citizens who contribute enthusiastically to school life by supporting younger pupils with their reading or assisting teachers in physical education lessons.

The school has valid processes to support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). There are suitable systems to identify pupils' needs quickly and a range of interventions and purposeful support are organised to support these pupils, including effective co-operation with a variety of external agencies to receive expert guidance and advice. Provision in the 'Y Gelli' class for pupils in the primary department with more profound difficulties is strong. As a result of effective provision and leadership, many pupils with ALN make good progress against their personal targets.

There are effective arrangements which ensure that pupils transfer successfully from one phase to the next. Initial questionnaires for the parents of pupils in the Reception class provide a clear picture of their strengths and needs on entry and allow relevant staff to plan purposefully and enable them to settle. There is also effective co-operation between the staff at 'Y Gelli' and the mainstream classes. Relevant staff share comprehensive information about individual pupils and several beneficial visits are conducted for Year 6 pupils in the cluster to the secondary department.

Leaders promote and monitor pupils' attendance regularly. They work purposefully with families and external agencies to address absences. As a result, many pupils' attendance levels are improving across the school. In the 2018-19 academic year, the school's attendance was much lower than in other similar schools. Improvement was seen in pupils' attendance in 2022-23 and a slight improvement again in 2023-24. However, attendance rates across the school remain relatively low.

The school maintains a suitable culture of safeguarding and promotes a caring ethos. However, there are significant health and safety issues relating to the secondary department's site.

Leading and improving

The headteacher is a personable leader who has included staff and pupils purposefully to create a suitable vision for the school. This vision is based on important principles, including developing confident, bilingual citizens who are ready to contribute fully to their society. The headteacher is supported purposefully by members of the senior leadership team. However, their responsibilities are not distributed evenly. It is not always clear who has strategic responsibility for whole-school aspects and cross-school strategic planning for the curriculum and skills has not been developed in full. Over time, this has hindered pupils' progressive development in their skills and learning.

Senior leaders support and challenge middle leaders suitably, on the whole. They hold termly meetings which provide beneficial opportunities for them to discuss important issues, including pupils' outcomes, self-evaluation processes and progress against the improvement priorities. However, these arrangements are not formal or consistent enough to ensure that middle leaders are held accountable, for example in evaluating the performance and quality of work within their areas of responsibility. Leaders do not give coherent enough consideration to pupils' standards or the progressive development of their subject knowledge and skills when measuring the impact of their work.

The school has a calendar of suitable activities to evaluate the quality of provision. Leaders analyse data, observe learning sessions and use questionnaires occasionally to seek pupils' opinions. They often include governors and staff purposefully in these activities. In general, this contributes to leaders' ability to identify some strengths and a few specific aspects that are in need of improvement. However, their evaluations are too generous and leaders at all levels do not give enough consideration to the impact of teaching on the standard of pupils' work or outcomes.

On the whole, leaders use the findings of monitoring activities appropriately to set improvement priorities and this has led to a few improvements, such as the standard of feedback given to pupils. They have planned to improve some important aspects of pupils' skills, specifically the development of the numeracy and oral skills of the school's oldest pupils. However, the expected outcomes are not defined clearly enough and not enough attention is given to improving planning and teaching. Overall, middle leaders have suitable improvement plans which focus on improving some relevant aspects within their areas of responsibility.

The professional development objectives of all members of staff link purposefully with the school's improvement priorities. Staff are given beneficial opportunities to undertake purposeful research work to influence the quality of teaching and learning. For example, the research to improve pupils' oral skills has had an appropriate effect on improving their participation in a few lessons.

The governors are an active and conscientious body that supports the school and provides appropriate challenge, when necessary. For example, they have been at the forefront of supporting the headteacher to cope with the significant challenge of the current building and in planning ahead for the new building. However, the condition of the building and safety of the site are a cause for concern.

The headteacher, the school's finance officer and the governors monitor the school's expenditure and budget carefully under challenging financial circumstances. Leaders plan the expenditure of the pupil development grant sensibly. For example, staff are provided with purposeful training so that they are able to support pupils and their families, and mentoring sessions are offered to pupils to improve their well-being and raise their aspirations. Leaders monitor and evaluate the effect of the use of grants purposefully. Leaders have firm arrangements to reduce the effect of poverty on pupils and their families. They work close with relevant external agencies and ensure that there are equal opportunities for pupils to receive similar extra-curricular experiences.

The school gives due attention to some national priorities, for example in responding fully to the Additional Learning Needs Act and in promoting the Welsh language and the sense of Welshness among pupils. Leaders have responded positively to some of the recommendations from the last inspection, including developing the principles of foundation learning successfully. They have also had a positive effect on fostering positive working relationships with their pupils and ensuring good attitudes to learning and behaviour. However, leaders have not made sufficient progress in ensuring strong and consistent teaching across the school. Leadership has also not had enough of an effect on important areas, such as ensuring coherent development in pupils' skills.

Communication between the school and parents is clear and timely. Staff share information about pupils' activity and progress through a variety of purposeful media. They use the local community successfully to enrich learning experiences, for example by inviting people from local businesses and former pupils to share their expertise and raise pupils' aspirations for the future.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are a cause for concern.

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

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

Leaders and governors manage the school's funding appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

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:

Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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This document has been translated by Trosol (Welsh to English).