

A report on

Ysgol Pen Barras

**Ffordd Glasdir
Ruthin
Denbighshire
LL15 1QQ**

Date of inspection: February 2026

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol Pen Barras

Name of provider	Ysgol Pen Barras
Local authority	Denbighshire County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	293
Pupils of statutory school age	227
Number in nursery classes	31
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 22.9%)	2.6%
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 11.1%)	3.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	67.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	02/09/2024

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	25/03/2019
Start date of inspection	02/02/2026

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.

Summary

The school's dedicated leaders and staff provide a Welsh and inclusive learning environment for pupils by embracing the vision, 'Gweithiwn â gwên yn sŵn y Gymraeg', extremely successfully. This fosters pupils' positive attitudes to their learning, which contributes well to their enjoyment of their learning experiences. Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs and those from low-income households, make sound progress in a relevant range of skills across the areas of learning.

Teachers and assistants have supportive working relationships with pupils, and they identify their well-being needs and learning interests skilfully. They are valuable language models for pupils and this, in turn, has a positive effect on most pupils' Welsh speaking skills. One of the provision's notable qualities is the rich experiences that pupils are given as they develop their talents by taking part in events and performing in a wide range of local and national competitions. Through this, pupils develop a wide range of important learning, personal and social skills.

Teachers provide an interesting range of activities appropriately which engage and maintain pupils' interest in their learning effectively. However, teachers do not always plan progression in pupils' skills purposefully enough to support them to make constructive progress in the whole range of skills over time.

Leaders, including members of the governing body, identify the school's strengths and areas for development appropriately. However, monitoring and evaluation activities do not always focus purposefully enough on the effect of the provision on pupils' skills and progress, or contribute purposefully enough to the improvement planning process.

The school is an integral part of the local community, with pupils enriching their learning experiences through beneficial visits successfully. Parents are proud that their children attend this school and appreciate the valuable links as they engage beneficially with their children's learning.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Refine self-evaluation processes in order to measure the effect of provision on pupils' learning
- R2 Support pupils to make constructive progress in the whole range of skills across the areas of learning over time

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Every member of the school community realises the school's vision, namely 'Gweithiwn â gwên yn sŵn y Gymraeg', enthusiastically and successfully for all who are members of it. Through this, pupils receive inclusive guidance and support from leaders and staff to enjoy their learning in a stimulating and Welsh learning environment. This is a notable virtue of the provision which contributes robustly to fostering most pupils' positive attitudes to their learning.

The headteacher provides wise and considered leadership that builds a clear strategic direction for the school. He is supported by a dedicated leadership team and inspiring staff who provide a rich range of learning experiences for pupils. As a result, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those from low-income households, make sound progress in a good range of skills.

Teachers and assistants have supportive working relationships with pupils. They identify their well-being and learning needs skilfully and meet their interests well. One of the strengths of teaching is the way in which staff convey the Welsh language purposefully and introduce vocabulary and language patterns to pupils constructively over time. As a result, most pupils' ability to speak Welsh is a strength. Overall, staff have high expectations of pupils and support them well to make progress. However, teachers' expectations in supporting pupils to present their learning neatly are not high enough.

Staff encourage and nurture pupils' interests in reading successfully by promoting a reading culture effectively. Through stimulating reading activities, most pupils develop their skills successfully in reading texts in both languages. This, in turn, supports the development of their Welsh writing skills where pupils enrich their use of the language skilfully while presenting pieces of creative writing effectively. On the whole, teachers do not provide enough regular opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their English writing skills in a full range of genres.

Staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their physical and creative skills, such as woodwork. Almost all pupils enjoy immersing themselves in a good variety of activities which support them to experiment with a variety of art media. Through this, they produce attractive creative pieces that are displayed stylishly across the learning environment. Pupils' performance skills, such as singing, recitation and dancing, are developed extremely masterfully as they develop important personal and social skills.

Spotlight: Nurturing pupils' inherent pride in their school, community and Wales through the expressive arts

Through a range of valuable experiences that are provided by staff, pupils strengthen their sense of belonging as talented and committed members of the school's Welsh community, the local area and nationally in Wales.

The experiences to participate and compete in a wide variety of activities and competitions support pupils to develop their musical talents and perform to a high standard. They commit themselves to working together as enthusiastic team members, developing perseverance in practising and building confidence whilst stepping onto various stages, for example 'Gŵyl Top Dre' and local and national eisteddfodau.

These experiences provide regular opportunities for pupils to express themselves confidently and to demonstrate positive attitudes towards themselves and their learning. In addition, through numerous opportunities, pupils develop hugely beneficial oral skills, improve important personal and social aspects, foster pride in their cultural identity and make an extremely valuable contribution to their creative and wider life experiences. In addition, it deepens their knowledge and appreciation of Wales's history, culture and heritage extremely successfully.

Most pupils develop their mathematics skills and deepen their understanding of number concepts successfully. Teachers provide purposeful mental mathematics sessions that support pupils to improve their numerical proficiency well. In general, teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in everyday situations, including purposeful visits to the local community. However, teachers do not always provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in relevant learning experiences. Through this, pupils do not apply their numeracy skills to the same level as their mathematics work in activities across the areas of learning. On the whole, the regular opportunities for pupils to develop their digital skills are suitable.

Teachers plan the provision, including the external learning areas, effectively, which, on the whole, encourages consistency in pupils' learning experiences across the school. However, teachers' planning does not support pupils to make constructive progress in their skills over time, particularly in English writing, and their numeracy and digital skills across the areas of learning. Pupils are grateful for the opportunities to influence the learning activities and the wider work of the school through the various councils. This gives them beneficial opportunities to develop a good range of skills, for example when the Criw Cymraeg invited a local band to entertain the school community.

Most pupils' spiritual and moral understanding develops well. Important values are incorporated intelligently by teachers into worship sessions and relevant learning activities. In addition, as part of the process of reflecting on different aspects of life as well

as their learning, teachers provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to consider the progress they make in their work, such as identifying what they need to improve in their learning during 'step forward' sessions. Through this, most pupils, including those with ALN, receive beneficial support through beneficial support programmes with their well-being needs and literacy and numeracy skills.

Leaders have a robust procedure for self-evaluating the provision, including a clear timetable of activities that include all staff and a few governors. On the whole, leaders and staff reflect sensibly on important aspects of provision, identifying strengths and areas for development appropriately. However, the activities do not always focus purposefully enough on the effect of the provision on pupils' skills and progress. In addition, there is not a consistent enough link between the evaluations of the monitoring activities and the improvement planning process.

Governors provide suitable support and challenge to the school. They work together appropriately as a body and as members of sub-committees to scrutinise leaders' strategic decisions. A few of them participate in beneficial activities that strengthen their understanding of strategic priorities, such as visits to the learning environment and having relevant discussions with pupils about their learning.

Leaders arrange beneficial opportunities for staff to hold regular professional discussions. Where appropriate, they organise beneficial professional learning activities that respond to staff's requirements and the school's priorities. As valuable members of specific units across the school, staff reflect on their practices regularly, which, over time, supports them to act as an effective professional learning community.

Leaders create and maintain useful relationships with the school's partners. They share information with parents in an orderly and timely manner, and provide them with beneficial opportunities to visit the school to support them to engage beneficially with their children's learning.

Additional information

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

The school's arrangements for the management of the site are not 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. Although leaders have an agreed recovery plan to improve the financial situation, they have not acted promptly enough on a few of the steps in this plan.

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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

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

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

Copies of the report

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

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

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Publications Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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