

A report on
Ysgol Sarn Bach

**Sarn Bach
Pwllheli
Gwynedd
LL53 7LF**

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 Sarn Bach

Name of provider	Ysgol Sarn Bach
Local authority	Gwynedd Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	24
Pupils of statutory school age	20
Number in nursery classes	1
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%)	16.0%
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%)	*
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	65.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	
Date of headteacher appointment	

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	23/10/2017
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

Ysgol Sarn Bach is a caring community in which pupils' wellbeing and their learning experiences are at the heart of provision. The school is led by a headteacher who has a clear vision to create a safe, welcoming and supportive environment for pupils and the whole school community. As a result, pupils feel happy and safe, and positive relationships between school and home are a clear strength.

Staff work together closely as a team and are committed to providing inclusive learning experiences for pupils. Many staff members undertake leadership responsibilities and co-operate effectively with local schools to develop their practices. Although self-evaluation arrangements are implemented suitably, the processes do not always identify clearly enough the specific aspects of teaching that need to be improved. As a result, improvement actions do not always have a purposeful effect on pupils' progress and standards.

Staff succeed in fostering positive behaviour and a strong sense of belonging in pupils. Pupils are respectful and show care towards each other. Staff model the Welsh language successfully, which, in turn, supports most pupils to develop into confident speakers by the end of their time at the school. However, pupils are not always encouraged consistently to use Welsh independently in their play and learning.

Most pupils' literacy and mathematics skills develop appropriately, and reading, digital and creative opportunities support their engagement skilfully. On the whole, teachers' feedback does not always provide enough of a challenge to help pupils improve the content and quality of their work. In addition, in a few lessons, staff over-lead the learning which limits opportunities for pupils to develop as independent learners, especially the youngest pupils.

Support arrangements for pupils, including those with additional learning needs, are strong, and the school shows a clear commitment to ensuring that all children have an equal opportunity to succeed in an inclusive environment.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Strengthen self-evaluation processes to identify and act on priorities and specific aspects of teaching and learning
- R2 Improve provision for the youngest pupils, including supporting them to be curious and independent learners
- R3 Improve teachers' feedback to support pupils to improve the content and quality of their work

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Ysgol Sarn Bach is an inclusive, caring and supportive learning community in which pupils' wellbeing and standards of learning are central to the work of all members of its community. The headteacher leads the school with a clear and coherent vision that is based on ensuring robust wellbeing for all pupils, as well as providing rich and stimulating learning experiences. This vision has been shared effectively with all the school's partners. As a result, staff develop a clear sense of purpose and shared values that influence pupils' learning experiences positively.

The headteacher conveys robust social and moral values, and works diligently to ensure that these are rooted consistently in the school's work. This contributes directly to creating a homely, welcoming and safe environment in which pupils and staff feel respected and valued. Strong and productive relationships are fostered between the school and home successfully, which supports pupils' well-being and learning effectively.

Staff are dedicated and work together closely to ensure purposeful and inclusive learning experiences that are based on pupils' ideas. All members of the teaching team undertake leadership roles in specific areas, and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. This strong teamwork enables the school to act effectively as a professional learning community. They work well with schools in the cluster which results in ensuring good opportunities to support continuous professional development. However, although leaders implement suitable self-evaluation arrangements, they do not always identify sharply enough the specific aspects of teaching that need to be improved. On the whole, this limits the effect of improvement actions on pupils' progress and standards.

The robust relationship between staff and pupils is one of the school's notable strengths. Staff know pupils well and create a safe and caring environment, which fosters a strong sense of belonging for pupils. As a result, pupils feel happy at school, and have a clear understanding of who they can turn to if concerns arise. Pupils' behaviour across the school is positive, and they show consistent respect for each other, staff and visitors. The care and responsibility shown by the older pupils to their youngest peers is a strong feature of the school's culture.

Staff model the Welsh language effectively and use immersion methods skilfully when introducing pupils to rich vocabulary and correct language patterns. As a result, by the end of their time at the school, almost all pupils develop into confident Welsh speakers and show positive attitudes towards the language. However, adults do not always encourage pupils to use their Welsh skills consistently when playing and working independently in their learning areas. On the whole, this limits purposeful opportunities for pupils to reinforce and apply their skills spontaneously.

Most pupils' literacy skills develop appropriately in both languages. Recent cooperative work with schools in the catchment area has strengthened reading provision, by offering pupils various opportunities to read texts in groups, independently and online. This has a positive effect on pupils' confidence and reading skills as they move through the school. Many of the youngest pupils develop their early writing skills appropriately, and as they mature, they write increasingly confidently in a range of purposeful genres as they move through the school.

Teachers respond to pupils' work regularly, by placing a clear focus on language accuracy. However, teachers' feedback does not provide enough of a challenge for pupils to stimulate meaningful improvements in their work. As a result, pupils tend to focus solely on correcting linguistic errors, without improving the content or quality of their work.

On the whole, pupils show enjoyment in their learning and respond intelligently to their tasks. They show positive attitudes to their learning and concentrate for appropriate periods. However, in some cases, over-direction by adults limits opportunities for pupils to develop into independent learners and to take responsibility for their learning. In general, the provision for the youngest pupils does not encourage them to learn increasingly actively and explore purposefully in rich learning experiences.

Most pupils' mathematics skills across the school develop well. Leaders have taken advantage of effective networking work to improve planning and provision to develop pupils' numeracy skills across the areas of learning. Regular professional learning opportunities for staff strengthen their confidence to teach pupils a range of skills, particularly when using digital tools to enrich provision. As a result, pupils, especially at the top of the school, benefit from interesting digital experiences that encourage their engagement with their learning at school and at home.

Staff ensure stimulating provision to develop pupils' creative, physical, cultural and spiritual skills. Pupils have valuable opportunities to experiment creatively, to perform, and to develop a growing understanding of their Welsh identity, culture and heritage. The robust physical provision, which includes swimming, running and cycling activities, contributes effectively to pupils' physical development and emotional wellbeing.

Support arrangements for pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), are strong. Effective progress-tracking systems enable early intervention for pupils, and the majority of ALN pupils make relevant progress towards their individual targets.

The governing body is actively supportive of the school. They participate in an appropriate range of self-evaluation activities and promote the school in its community successfully. Leaders and staff are aware of the needs of families and ensure that all school activities are accessible to all pupils. One of the school's strengths is the way in which staff

communicate and welcome parents and the wider community to the school in order to discuss the life and work of the school. Pupils on the school council offer practical support by sharing school uniforms and ensuring that free fruit is available daily for everyone.

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.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carers 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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