

A report on

Ysgol Y Moelwyn

**Wynne Road
Blaenau Ffestiniog
Gwynedd
LL41 3DW**

Date of inspection: April 2026

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol y Moelwyn

Name of provider	Ysgol y Moelwyn
Local authority	Cyngor Gwynedd
Language of the provider	Welsh
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	Bilingual
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	-
Number of pupils on roll	355
Pupils of statutory school age	355
Number in the sixth form	-
Percentage of statutory school age 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 secondary sector is 20.3%)	16.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the secondary sector is 9.0%)	26.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	81.7%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Lead partner for Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	10/01/2022

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April 2026

Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	09/10/2017
Start date of inspection	27/04/2026

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 y Moelwyn is a warm, caring and inclusive community where secure relationships between staff and pupils are at the heart of its success. A strong ethos of promoting responsibility, respect and co-operation, based on 'Ffordd Ffestiniog', permeates all aspects of school life effectively. As a result, pupils feel safe, are respected and develop a strong sense of belonging to their school and their community. Local and community pride are reflected clearly in most pupils' positive attitudes to their learning, their excellent behaviour and their confident use of the Welsh language as a natural language of communication.

One of the school's notable strengths is the quality of relationships and the culture of respect and co-operation within lessons. Most teachers know their pupils well and provide them with effective support and guidance. This enables many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), to make sound progress. In a minority of lessons, teaching is particularly effective as a result of skilful planning, high expectations and probing questioning. In these lessons, pupils make strong progress. However, in a few cases, teachers' expectations are not high enough and a lack of challenge and focus on developing subject knowledge limits pupils' progress.

Provision to develop pupils' literacy skills is a strength. There is purposeful planning to ensure regular opportunities to develop reading, writing and oracy skills across the curriculum. As a result, many pupils read and write effectively for a range of purposes and use rich vocabulary, including dialectal elements that reflect their local area. However, a minority of pupils make repeated linguistic errors and rely on structural support on their written work.

Opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills in suitable subjects across the curriculum are limited. Although many pupils have sound basic number skills, provision to develop numeracy skills across the subjects is in its early days. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to solve problems, reason mathematically or apply their number skills in new contexts. The development of pupils' digital skills is sound, on the whole. Many pupils use technology appropriately and develop their digital skills effectively in a range of contexts.

The curriculum is relevant to pupils and reflects and celebrates the culture, heritage and unique context of the area successfully. Rich learning experiences, including interesting educational visits and working with partners, broaden pupils' horizons and foster pride in their '*cynefin*', or local area.

The school places a clear emphasis on pupils' well-being. There are robust pastoral systems, effective support and comprehensive provision for pupils, which ensure that they receive the appropriate support to make progress and develop as confident individuals. The school uses effective strategies to support and monitor the attendance of specific groups. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved over time and compares favourably with that of similar schools.

The headteacher is an effective leader who promotes a clear vision, which is upheld and shared successfully by the whole school community. A strong culture of listening to the voice of pupils, staff and parents leads to meaningful improvements and this is a particular strength. The various pupil forums influence key aspects of school life effectively and enable pupils to develop as confident and dedicated citizens. Although leaders use a range of quality assurance procedures and plan purposefully for improvement, the use of data is not always incisive enough to inform self-evaluation and improvement priorities specifically enough.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Strengthen self-evaluation processes, particularly the use of data, to ensure that improvement priorities are incisive enough
- R2 Ensure co-ordinated provision to develop numeracy in relevant subjects
- R3 Disseminate the strong teaching practices seen in the best lessons to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching across the school

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to providing for the whole pupil, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Teaching and learning

The culture of respect and effective co-operation between teachers and pupils at Ysgol y Moelwyn is a notable strength that enriches teaching and learning experiences. Most teachers know their pupils well and their care for them is evident. The positive learning environment also promotes a supportive ethos. As a result of these motivational features, most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and persevere and concentrate well.

These positive aspects are highlighted in the format and careful presentation of pupils' books. Here, we can see many pupils responding positively to their teachers' useful and constructive written feedback. These teachers use clear success criteria to support pupils to understand what needs to be achieved and improved. A large number of pupils take advantage of the Welsh and English language improvement tokens, which offer specific language tasks that are tailored carefully to enable them to correct specific errors that litter their work.

The robust teaching of many teachers enables pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), to make good progress. These teachers:

- plan tasks and activities that build logically and offer a level of challenge that suits pupils' needs
- provide up-to-date and useful resources and support pupils and maintain their interest
- provide oral feedback and regular and beneficial support as they move around the classroom
- question effectively to check understanding and encourage pupils to use rich, subject vocabulary when responding

In a minority of lessons, teaching is particularly effective, which enables pupils to make strong and swift progress. In these lessons, teachers are passionate about their subjects and spark pupils' enthusiasm. They tailor planning skilfully and steer learning to offer clear instructions and explanations so that pupils of all abilities understand the nature of the tasks that are set. They also ask probing questions that challenge pupils and encourage them to explain and justify their responses.

In a few lessons, shortcomings in teaching limit the progress made by pupils. In these lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils are able to achieve.

They present superficial tasks to keep pupils busy and there is not enough focus on developing subject knowledge. Nor do they check pupils' progress or understanding well enough.

The curriculum at Ysgol y Moelwyn incorporates and celebrates the context, culture and heritage of the local area extremely successfully. For example, Year 7 pupils develop and strengthen their literacy skills alongside their subject knowledge through joint Welsh and humanities lessons. Leaders reflect on the content of the curriculum continuously, revising and refining it to ensure that the needs of all learners are met. An excellent feature is the wide range of learning experiences and educational trips that enrich the curriculum further. For example, staff take advantage of visits to local historical places, such as 'Yr Ysgwrn', which enrich pupils' understanding and pride in their area and their country. The experience is extended further with a trip to Belgium and the resting place of Hedd Wyn. The school also works purposefully with partner primary schools in planning provision that ensures the progressive development of learning experiences from primary to secondary.

The curriculum in Year 10 and 11 offers a range of subjects that reflect the context of the school and pupils' interests well. As a result, they benefit from an appropriate range of courses within the school and through effective partnerships with colleges, providers and other schools. These arrangements meet most pupils' needs effectively.

The school has robust values based on 'Ffordd Festiniog' – Responsibility, Respect and Co-operation. As a result, the school develops pupils who play an active part within their local communities. Purposeful planning to promote equality, challenge prejudices and celebrate diversity is a clear strength and permeates many subjects. Relationships and sexuality education is provided effectively across the school. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about diversity, including the experiences of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds and LGBTQ+ communities.

The health and well-being programme is a central part of the curriculum and provides relevant opportunities to discuss current affairs, such as online safety and substance misuse. Leaders use data from well-being questionnaires appropriately to plan activities that support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and emotional development. The school gives full consideration to the voice and opinions of pupils when planning the programme and external experts are invited to enrich provision further.

A wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities enrich the curriculum and broaden pupils' experiences. These include 'Swpar Chwarel' where food is offered to the community, a chess club and an art club. Many participate enthusiastically in a range of activities within physical education lessons and through a range of extra-curricular sports activities.

Literacy

Provision to develop the literacy skills of pupils at Ysgol y Moelwyn has been co-ordinated carefully. Leaders have mapped purposeful opportunities that ensure that pupils' literacy skills in Welsh and English are developed across the curriculum. The school reviews and evaluates provision in detail and makes modifications, where appropriate.

Across the curriculum, there are a variety of beneficial opportunities for pupils to practise and strengthen their basic reading skills. There are also opportunities for them to develop their higher-order reading skills in a number of subjects. As a result of increasing opportunities, many pupils interpret and compare sources successfully. They respond sensibly to reading materials in a number of subjects, including the modern history of the Iranian women's football team, to local history about the strike at Penrhyn quarry. In Welsh lessons, many analyse stylistic features in detail, for example when analysing scenes and characters from the film 'Y Mynydd Grug'. A minority of pupils analyse and interpret a variety of texts skilfully and in detail, elaborating on the effect of the style. In English lessons, many are able to recognise linguistic literary techniques suitably and a majority interpret the effect of these appropriately, with a few doing so skilfully.

Most pupils listen carefully to each other's views and to the teacher's instructions. Although a few pupils' spoken language is littered with slang in both languages, many pupils discuss and share ideas comfortably and fairly confidently. In general, they contribute purposefully to class discussions, with many offering constructive comments in Welsh and a majority doing so successfully in English. Yet, a few pupils are reticent and lack the confidence to elaborate on their answers in both languages. Many pupils have good Welsh vocabulary and weave natural dialectal words and the area's pithy sayings into their conversations, for example when they describe the quality and taste of the honey from the school's beehive. A few pupils express themselves extremely effectively and fluently.

Leaders work effectively with departments to ensure that there are suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills. As a result, many pupils produce interesting work for a range of audiences and purposes. For example, in history lessons, they discuss whether political reasons were the main cause of Welsh protests in modern times. Many organise their written work logically, using paragraphs correctly and suitable subject vocabulary. Throughout their work, pupils use pithy dialectal sayings, such as '*Roedd mam yn beryg bywyd pan yn siopa*'. In both languages, pupils across the range of ability use glossaries and writing structures beneficially to develop their writing skills. This often leads to resilience to write at length. However, a minority of pupils make frequent

spelling and grammatical errors in both languages. They are also too reliant on writing frames to support them with their written English work. There are sensible strategies, such as 'Focus and fix it', to help pupils improve the accuracy of their written English work. In general, pupils take good advantage of the valuable resources available at the 'language stations', which are displayed clearly in the classrooms.

Numeracy

The school is beginning the work of co-ordinating provision to develop pupils' numeracy skills in the relevant subjects. There are some suitable opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their skills in relevant subjects beyond mathematics. Although there is an opportunity for pupils to show fluency in the tasks, there are not enough opportunities for them to solve problems, reason mathematically or apply numeracy skills in new contexts.

In general, a majority of pupils have sound basic number skills. They use the four number rules correctly, calculate with decimals and work well with standard forms. Within mathematics lessons, a majority of pupils' understanding of simple angle rules and the concepts of measurement, shape and space is appropriate. A few pupils extend their skills well to more complex aspects, such as calculating the length of an arc and the area of a sector.

In a few subjects across the curriculum, a majority of pupils deal with symbols appropriately and use simple formulae effectively. For example, in science, pupils calculate speed successfully. Many pupils extract correct information from tables and graphs and make simple analyses of patterns.

A minority of pupils have weak numeracy skills. They do not have an adequate understanding of aspects such as place value, which limits their ability to organise decimals and add and subtract numbers. A few pupils also rely on procedural shortcuts. For example, they subtract zero when dividing without a sufficient conceptual understanding of the mathematical principles. A minority of pupils have difficulty drawing graphs correctly and face challenges when creating sensible axis scales and plotting data correctly.

Digital skills

The school has a robust vision to develop pupils' digital skills, placing a clear emphasis on nurturing pupils' confidence and tenacity to flourish by developing their proficiency. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to apply their skills within their digital lessons

and, although in its early days, appropriate experiences are developing across the curriculum.

Many pupils develop their digital skills appropriately. They have a sound understanding of online safety and demonstrate advanced digital skills, for example when using coding programmes to control model trains and motors in Year 9.

Wider skills

Many pupils develop a suitable range of wider skills across the curriculum. In art lessons, they sketch confidently, by experimenting creatively with different styles, such as work inspired by Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol. In their design and technology lessons, many take advantage of opportunities to develop their creativity appropriately in designing and producing items independently. In their music lessons, they develop their thinking and creative skills appropriately by using software to compose melodies independently.

Well-being, care, support and guidance

Ysgol y Moelwyn is a warm and caring community where pupils and staff work together effectively. Staff know the pupils and their families exceptionally well. It is a close, supportive and inclusive community with a familial atmosphere and a strong sense of belonging to one school. Nearly all pupils feel that they are respected and treated fairly and the school's values of respect, responsibility and co-operation are at the heart of its ethos. The school acts on the 'Ffordd Ffestiniog' vision, which focuses on nurturing pupils who are responsible, respect others and are ready to work together within the school and beyond. Nearly all pupils feel safe at school and are confident to express any concerns. If concerns arise, the school responds promptly and sensitively.

The school has robust systems for monitoring and support pupils' attendance. Staff forge strong relationships with families, emphasising the importance and impact of attending school on a daily basis. The school identifies and targets the attendance of groups of pupils and works with the welfare team and external agencies to provide suitable interventions. Over the past three years, pupils' attendance, including pupils who are eligible for free school meals, has improved and is above that seen in similar schools.

Most pupils' behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school. They demonstrate strong social skills, treat adults and each other with respect and courtesy and greet visitors warmly. They show obvious pride in their school, their work and the Welsh language.

Welsh is the natural medium of communication and pupils speak the language confidently, fluently and spontaneously. Most demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.

Leaders have a detailed understanding of pupils' personal and social needs and use this information effectively to monitor well-being from day to day. As a result, pupils have timely access to appropriate care without obstacles. Staff at 'Stwlan' and 'Cwt y Bugail' provide valuable support to pupils who need emotional or academic support in a calm and safe environment. Pastoral and well-being leaders work effectively with external partners to respond to pupils' well-being needs promptly and effectively.

The school has robust transition arrangements. This includes support for pupils who transfer at different points in their school careers and as they prepare to move on to further education or the world of work.

Spotlight: The influence and effect of the pupil's voice

The influence and effect of the pupil's voice is a strong element of the school's work and is used to inform all aspects of provision. A broad representation of pupils forms the membership of various forums and the school council. They are eloquent, respectful and confident individuals who demonstrate mature leadership skills and influence the experiences of their fellow pupils successfully. For example:

- The equality forum has contributed effectively to promoting fairness, respect and inclusion by organising activities such as a '*Cariad nid Casineb*' ('Love not Hate') competition on St Dwynwen's Day. This raises pupils' awareness of the importance of positive relationships and equality.
- The teaching and learning forum has influenced a change to assessment arrangements.
- Following a period of research and consultation, the council's work has ensured improvements to the environment by introducing new benches around the school.

Most pupils have a sound awareness of the effect of the work of the forums and the council as a result of clear communication structures, which include discussions and weekly feedback.

Provision for pupils with ALN is a strength. The school has effective procedures for identifying pupils' needs at an early stage. Robust transition processes include regular early opportunities to enable pupils to familiarise themselves with the school and settle quickly. The ALN team works closely with partner primary schools to gather and analyse a

wide range of relevant information to plan purposefully to ensure a smooth transition to secondary school.

Leaders analyse literacy and numeracy data in detail to provide suitable interventions that target pupils' specific needs, including support to develop skills and emotional well-being. The team monitors pupils' progress regularly and adapts provision flexibly, as necessary.

The ALN team's thorough knowledge of individual pupils ensures that those who attend the specialist provision in the 'Nyth' room receive purposeful interventions and support which enable them to feel at home and to make progress. Individual development plans and one-page profiles are comprehensive and useful. They provide clear and practical guidance to teachers on how to support pupils effectively. Clear guidelines, purposeful training and high-quality resources are provided to ensure that staff are well equipped to meet the needs of nearly all pupils in the classroom. As a result, pupils with ALN make good progress over time.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding and there are appropriate arrangements to keep pupils safe. Leaders ensure that staff are given appropriate statutory training on child protection and, as a result, they are clear about their responsibilities in terms of keeping pupils safe.

Leading and improving

The headteacher is a passionate and ambitious leader who places pupils' well-being and progress at the heart of the school's work. She is supported skilfully by the deputy headteacher. Despite the significant responsibilities of these senior leaders, they work effectively with an extended team of staff who lead on key aspects.

Together, leaders promote a clear vision called 'Ffordd Ffestiniog'. This vision has been shared successfully and is upheld by the whole school community. This has contributed significantly to improvements in behaviour, attitudes to learning and raising pupils' aspirations over time.

One of the school's notable strengths is the way in which leaders gather, and respond to, the views of staff, pupils and parents. This has led to tangible improvements, such as improving resources and facilities and developing a strong team ethos.

Leaders focus well on national priorities and have made strong progress in important areas, for example in reforming ALN arrangements and promoting the Welsh language. They have also made sound progress against the recommendations from the last inspection. Strong leadership has had a positive effect on a number of important aspects of the school's work. These include improving the quality of teaching, raising standards of

literacy and improving pupils' engagement and attendance. However, strategic planning to improve numeracy provision and standards is in its early days.

Middle leaders understand their roles well and respond positively when contributing to whole-school improvements. Regular meetings with senior leaders provide them with appropriate challenge and support. Due attention is given to strengths and areas for improvement, focusing on important areas such as the development of literacy skills, teaching and the curriculum and developing leadership skills.

The school has comprehensive quality assurance arrangements which include lesson observations, scrutiny of work and listening to the pupil's voice. Leaders at all levels contribute to these processes. They have a good knowledge of the school's overall priorities. Although leaders consider the effect of teaching appropriately, a few of their evaluations are too generous. Their use of data to help them to form an opinion about the quality of provision is developing, but this is not always incisive or consistent enough. As a result, evaluations do not always identify the most specific aspects for improvement incisively enough.

There is a clear link between whole-school priorities, performance management and review arrangements, and professional development. This enables the school to plan a professional development programme that supports all members of staff. Departmental priorities align closely with whole-school priorities. Performance management and review arrangements are suitable and targets align well with the school's priorities and staff's development needs.

Staff value the numerous opportunities that are available to them to share good practices and discuss pedagogy, for example through 'Lledaenu Llwyddiant' meetings. This has had a positive effect on the quality of teaching, strategies to promote positive relationships in the classroom and provision to improve literacy skills. The school also works effectively with other schools to share good practices and strengthen provision.

Governors have sound knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and offer appropriate challenge and support to leaders. The governing body is passionate about the school's role in the community.

The headteacher, business manager and governors monitor the budget carefully and ensure funding for the school's priorities. They also work productively to secure additional sources of funding to support projects.

The pupil development grant is used purposefully to support pupils and the school has a wide range of strategies in place to reduce the effect of poverty on pupils' achievement and well-being. This includes support for school uniforms, equipment and the cost of

activities, in addition to providing free food in the school's community café. This work has had a positive effect on the attendance rates of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. However, although there has been an improvement over the past three years, the performance of this group of pupils at the end of Year 11 continues to be lower than the performance of their peers in similar schools.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for site management do not give any cause for concern.

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

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances 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 and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body/committee members through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and 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 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 (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>)

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

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