

Ysgol Bryn Derw
Melfort Road
Newport
NP20 3FQ

09/07/2026

Dear leaders and staff

Interim visit: July 2026

A team of inspectors led by Lyn West HMI, recently visited Ysgol Bryn Derw in Newport to evaluate the school's progress in addressing the recommendation from its core inspection in March 2020, alongside progress in a further area of focus.

Since the core inspection the number of pupils on roll at the school has increased significantly. To accommodate the increase in pupil numbers the school now operates across three sites.

The team would like to thank the staff and pupils for their warm welcome and for their co-operation throughout the visit.

During the visit, inspectors

- observed teaching and learning
- reviewed pupils' work
- scrutinised a range of evidence and
- spoke with pupils, staff, and leaders.

Leaders and staff have worked very effectively to address the identified areas. They have a secure understanding of the school's current strengths and priorities for improvement and have appropriate plans in place to continue driving the school's development.

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Estyn welcomes correspondence in both English and Welsh. Correspondence received in either language will be given equal priority.

Focus of visit**Strengthen curriculum planning to meet the needs of pupils as they move through the school**

Since the last inspection, the school has continued to strengthen and refine its curriculum to ensure that it meets the increasingly complex needs of its pupils. Leaders have maintained a clear strategic focus on developing a broad and balanced curriculum that is ambitious, person-centred and aligned closely with the principles of Curriculum for Wales.

A notable development has been the introduction of learning pathways to support pupils with differing levels of need and stages of development. The school's sensory, emerging language and academic pathways provide a clear structure for personalising learning whilst maintaining high aspirations for all pupils. These pathways enable staff to tailor learning experiences successfully and support pupils to make progress from their individual starting points.

Leaders have continued to develop valuable opportunities for pupils across the school to apply their learning in practical, real-life contexts. Community-based learning, enterprise activities and therapeutic interventions, including outdoor learning, yoga and music interventions, enhance classroom learning effectively and contribute well to pupils' development.

Leaders have redesigned the primary curriculum successfully in response to the changing profile of pupils, many of whom enter school with increasingly complex needs. The curriculum places a meaningful emphasis on engagement, communication, emotional regulation, play-based learning and the development of independence. As pupils move through the primary phase, learning builds systematically on these foundations, enabling them to develop a range of valuable skills across the curriculum. For example, younger pupils learn how to exchange symbols for snacks and practise mark-making using a range of sensory materials.

The school has strengthened progression into secondary and post-16 education through a well-designed curriculum that balances accredited learning with effective preparation for adulthood. Qualifications are carefully matched to pupils' individual learning pathways rather than driving curriculum design. Pupils work towards a suitable range of accreditation and, where appropriate, GCSEs.

Alongside accredited learning, older pupils continue to access a broad range of experiences that develop independence and prepare them well for their next stage of education, employment or independent living. These include independent living skills, travel training, food preparation, relationships and sexuality education, work experience,

careers education and community-based learning. The curriculum is adapted effectively to meet pupils' individual needs, aspirations and planned destinations.

The impact of these curriculum improvements is evident across the school. During the visit nearly all pupils are happy and engage positively in their learning. Further, attendance has improved significantly over time. As a result, many pupils make consistently strong progress towards their individual learning targets, demonstrating the sustained impact of highly effective curriculum planning and well-targeted personalised provision.

Aspects of the school's successful curriculum provision have been recognised as examples of effective practice both locally and nationally. Its personalised relationships and sexuality education curriculum is being adopted across Newport's mainstream specialist classes and its work to broaden pupils' diets has been identified by dietitians as effective practice to share across Wales.

How effectively has the school developed bespoke communication pathways?

Leaders at Ysgol Bryn Derw have established a coherent, well-embedded whole-school approach to communication that meets the diverse needs of pupils effectively. Leaders plan pathways that reflect pupils' differing communication needs and stages of development.

Leaders have created a strong culture in which communication is central to all aspects of the school's work. Teachers share a clear understanding of this vision and successfully embed communication skills development across the curriculum. Staff strive to consistently use a wide range of communication strategies, from objects of reference to photographs, symbols, communication boards, signing and written text. This approach enables pupils with diverse and complex needs to make secure progress in their communication, engagement and independence. As a result, many pupils develop greater confidence in expressing themselves, improve their understanding of the world around them and participate with increasing independence in daily life.

Currently staff carefully track pupils' progress in communication across individual education plan targets (IEPs) and through planning scrutiny. Leaders have developed a communication ladder to track individual pupil progress across a range of communication skills, this is recently established and not yet embedded at a whole school level.

Staff use assessment information effectively to identify appropriate next steps and adapt planning, teaching and interventions to meet individual needs. They work closely with parents and carers to ensure that communication targets reflect pupils' priorities both in school and beyond.

Leaders have used grant funding to secure a range of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices with the aim of broadening the cohort of pupils who are able to use these devices to further develop their communication for life.

The school's well-established systems, including communication profiles, audits and evaluations of practice, support staff to meet pupils' needs effectively. An allocated communication higher level teaching assistant (HLTA) works with the school speech and language therapist (SALT) to oversee, support and quality assure this work.

Leaders plan for comprehensive professional learning and high-quality guidance to ensure that staff implement a consistent total communication approach with confidence, creating high expectations and consistency across the school. Leaders have identified this as an ongoing focus for school improvement, particularly as the school continues to grow.

The school's/PRU's latest core inspection report and further information on the process and purpose of interim visits can be found on our website:

<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/provider/6807004>

Yours sincerely



Dyfrig Ellis

Assistant Director