Dros ddysgwyr, dros Gymru
For learners, for Wales

A report on

Ysgol Bro Idris

Dolgellau
Gwynedd
LL40 1HY

Date of inspection: September 2026

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol Bro Idris

Name of provider	Ysgol Bro Idris
Local authority	Cyngor Gwynedd
Language of the provider	Welsh
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	Bilingual
Type of school	All age, 3-16
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	528
Pupils of statutory school age	455
Number in the sixth form	0
Number in nursery classes	47
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 all-age sector is 18.9%)	10.40%
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 all-age sector is 8.1%)	10.10%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	56.70%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.00%

Lead partner for Initial Teacher Education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/04/2016
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	09/12/2019
Start date of inspection	21/09/2026

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 Bro Idris is an inclusive and caring all age community where well-being, respect and a strong sense of belonging are at the heart of the school's life. Positive relationships between staff and pupils are a notable strength and most pupils behave very well and treat others with respect. They feel safe at school and trust the staff to respond promptly to any concerns. The school's safeguarding arrangements are sound, and staff know their pupils very well, providing effective support to those who need it. Staff promote the importance of good attendance and suitable support is in place to support pupils to attend school regularly. However, these interventions do not always have enough of an effect on improving the attendance of secondary-age pupils, in particular.

Many teachers provide well-organised sessions with clear instructions and appropriate resources that help pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), to make suitable progress. In the best sessions, teachers set very high expectations, use interesting and relevant contexts and develop pupils' independence effectively. However, in a minority of lessons, the level of challenge is not suitable and too much guidance by teachers limits opportunities for pupils to think and work independently.

Many pupils develop appropriate listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Many read confidently in Welsh and English and demonstrate a good understanding of what they read. The school promotes reading for pleasure effectively through specific reading plans, effective use of the library and workshops with local authors and poets. Many pupils' numeracy and digital skills also develop appropriately. However, there are not enough opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to develop their advanced reading skills, their extended writing and their more sophisticated numeracy and digital skills progressively over time.

The curriculum places a strong emphasis on Welsh identity, local heritage and pupils' personal development. A wide range of visits, visitors and work experiences enrich learning and connect the curriculum to the wider world. Pupils are given valuable opportunities to influence the school's life through different pupil-led committees.

The headteacher leads Ysgol Bro Idris with a clear vision and a strong commitment to well-being, respect and inclusion, ensuring that the school is a happy and supportive community across the six sites. With the support of an enthusiastic leadership team, there is a strong sense of teamwork across all sites and the school operates effectively as one all-age organisation. Leaders work together regularly to evaluate and improve provision. However, self-evaluation and improvement planning processes do not always focus specifically enough on the effect of provision on pupils' progress and skills. Successful emphasis is placed on promoting the Welsh language, supporting pupils' well-being and

reducing the effects of poverty. Strong relationships with families help pupils to take full advantage of the school's opportunities.

Recommendations

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

R1 Strengthen and ensure consistency in specific aspects of teaching highlighted in the report

R2 Ensure that pupils develop their skills progressively over time

R3 Improve attendance, particularly the attendance of secondary-age pupils

R4 Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning to focus more closely on the effect of provision on pupils' standards.

What happens next

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

Main findings

Teaching and learning

The positive working relationships between pupils and staff at Ysgol Bro Idris is a notable strength. Most pupils behave very well and the respect with which they treat their peers, staff and visitors is an excellent feature.

Many teachers give clear instructions and explanations during the sessions, using relevant terminology and language. Many pupils understand what they need to do, persevere diligently and concentrate well. Many recall previous work appropriately and remember key vocabulary well. In many sessions, pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make the expected progress in their knowledge and understanding. In these sessions, teachers plan well-organised lessons with appropriate activities and resources, which often build suitably on previous learning. They use simple closed questions to check understanding and move around the classroom to assess pupils' work, providing timely support. The level of challenge and pace of lessons enables many pupils to make suitable progress.

In the very few sessions where pupils make strong and consistent progress, teachers have very high expectations of what pupils are able to achieve. They make very effective use of authentic, contemporary, and relevant contexts that capture pupils' interest and stimulate them. These teachers plan very effectively to build on previous learning, using recall tasks in a way that links purposefully with the new learning. They create valuable opportunities for pupils to work with more challenging texts which broaden their experiences and develop their skills effectively. By modelling expectations effectively, these teachers ensure that pupils succeed in working independently. They use a variety of questioning strategies skilfully to encourage pupils to explain, justify and extend their responses.

In a minority of sessions across the school, pupils do not make as much progress as they could. A minority of pupils are too passive because teachers often over-direct learning. In terms of the youngest pupils, in a minority of sessions, opportunities to learn through play, exploration and discovery, both inside and outside the classroom, are not consistent enough to develop their independence increasingly. In a minority of sessions across the age range, teachers do not set high enough expectations or plan activities that challenge pupils across the range of ability consistently. For example, tasks are too simple or the pace of learning is too slow. These teachers do not always adapt work effectively enough to meet the needs of different pupils, including providing appropriate support to those who need it and sufficient challenge for more able pupils. These teachers' explanations and questions are not always clear enough and do not encourage pupils to explain, justify,

reason, and think more deeply. These teachers also do not always identify pupils' misconceptions at an early stage or adapt teaching in response.

In the best cases, teachers across the school provide oral and written feedback which identifies the appropriate next steps in pupils' work, which helps them to improve their work. However, written feedback is often too generic, important misconceptions and errors, including literacy errors, are not corrected and pupils are not always given appropriate opportunities to respond to the feedback and improve their work.

Across the age range, most pupils develop good listening skills. They listen attentively to staff and the contributions of their peers and respond appropriately to questions. Many of the youngest pupils speak naturally and use an increasing range of vocabulary and syntax. In the best practices, pupils acquire language skills through a range of rhymes and songs, with many joining in with the singing enthusiastically. A minority contribute exceptionally confidently in Welsh, discuss their ideas enthusiastically and use wide vocabulary.

As they move through the school, many use their oral skills purposefully, for example when discussing ideas in groups by using suitable subject vocabulary. A minority communicate with exceptional confidence in Welsh and English, by using a variety of syntax with increasing maturity. However, a minority of secondary-age pupils do not provide extended oral contributions and, too often, this is because teachers' questioning is not probing enough.

Focus on reading

Leaders and staff promote reading for pleasure through a variety of strategies, including specific learning schemes, the reading club at the library and opportunities to read individually at the beginning of sessions. The school organises for authors and poets to visit regularly to stimulate pupils to enjoy reading. As a result, many pupils' reading skills develop well. Many of the youngest pupils develop effective pre-reading skills and use their reading skills naturally in class activities.

As they move through the school, many primary-age pupils read familiar words correctly and use suitable strategies to decode unfamiliar words. By Year 6, many read aloud with increasing accuracy and purposeful expression. They demonstrate a sound understanding of what they read and many discuss books and authors enthusiastically and read contemporary materials and summarise it for their peers.

Many secondary-age pupils analyse the meaning of a variety of non-fiction and fictional reading texts accurately in Welsh and English sessions, identifying and analysing the effect of stylistic techniques increasingly effectively. However, across the school, there are few

purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their advanced reading skills outside the Welsh and English departments.

Many pupils' writing skills develop appropriately. By the end of Year 2, many pupils write a series of clear sentences and use basic features, such as capital letters and full-stops, correctly. As they move through the school, many form clear sentences, use correct syntax on the whole, and use appropriate punctuation. In the best practices, they move from using ready-made frameworks to recording their work more independently. A majority of secondary-age pupils express themselves fairly correctly in Welsh and English. However, there are not regular opportunities for pupils to correct basic errors in their work. Across the school, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills across the curriculum.

Numeracy

Many pupils across the school develop their mathematics and numeracy skills appropriately. The youngest pupils develop their understanding of number, measurement, and shape suitably and, as they move through the school, many recall previous knowledge successfully and use it to solve mathematical problems. Many secondary-age pupils demonstrate an appropriate range of basic number skills and develop a suitable understanding of aspects within number, shape, algebra, data and probability.

When they are given suitable opportunities, many pupils apply their numeracy skills appropriately in other areas of the curriculum. For example, in science and geography, many select and handle data appropriately, complete relevant calculations and produce suitable graphs and charts. At times, they also use this information to come to simple, sensible conclusions. However, pupils across the school do not apply their numeracy skills independently enough or increasingly enough. Too often, activities are too structured and many opportunities focus on gathering or presenting data and completing rudimentary calculations. As a result, pupils are not given enough opportunities to select the most appropriate mathematical methods for themselves, to solve problems in new contexts or to analyse and interpret data in enough detail. Additionally, pupils do not always present data precisely enough, for example when choosing scales or labelling graphs.

Digital

Across the school, pupils' digital skills develop suitably. A majority of primary-age pupils use digital technology confidently and with increasing independence. They use presentation and word processing software effectively and succeed in combining text, images, video and voiceover. As they move through the school, many pupils' basic skills in the secondary sector develop appropriately. For example, they produce and refine images confidently when creating a new logo for Sesiwn Fawr Dolgellau. There are limited

opportunities for pupils to develop their digital skills progressively, including their more sophisticated digital skills.

Wider skills

Many pupils develop appropriate creative, physical and thinking skills. They develop their creativity suitably through a range of art and practical activities. They use their thinking skills to discuss ideas, justify opinions, and make predictions, and develop their physical skills appropriately in specific activities. However, opportunities to develop these skills are not consistent or systematic enough across the school.

In 2023-2024 and 2024-2025, the performance of pupils at the end of Year 11 in literacy, numeracy and science was lower than that seen in similar schools. The school's data for 2025-26, which has not been verified, shows progress across these indicators.

Curriculum

The curriculum places a strong emphasis on developing Welsh identity and pupils' sense of belonging. On the whole, there are purposeful opportunities for them to learn about the history, culture and heritage of their local area and Wales, for example through the group discussion 'does the Welsh language have a future in Dolgellau?', or by appreciating the lyrics of contemporary Welsh songs. The curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development effectively.

The school makes beneficial use of its context as an all-age school to enrich pupils' experiences. For example, Year 6 pupils from the five primary sites are given beneficial experiences by attending weekly sessions at the main site. These sessions provide valuable access to teachers' specialisms and subject equipment, such as science sessions in the laboratories. This supports pupils to familiarise themselves with the environment, staff, and peers which, in turn, ensures smooth transition processes.

A clear strength of provision is the wide range of educational visits and visitors that broaden pupils' experiences and link their learning beneficially with their *cynefin* and the wider world. These opportunities complement the curriculum and bring learning to life. A notable example of this is the GCSE agriculture group trips to a local creamery and visits to farms in the area.

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about the world of work and careers through a range of local connections and those further afield. Year 10 pupils benefit greatly from completing a period of work experience. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum offers an appropriate range of options that respond to many pupils' interest

and aspirations. The partnership with the local college broadens provision beneficially by offering vocational courses, for example in construction, hairdressing, and business.

The comprehensive personal and social education programme responds purposefully to the findings of well-being questionnaires. As a result, pupils are given suitable opportunities to develop their understanding of important aspects of health and well-being, including healthy relationships and sexuality.

Well-being, care, support and guidance

Ysgol Bro Idris is an inclusive and caring community where a high priority is placed on improving pupils' well-being. There is a robust culture of safeguarding across the school. In general, pupils are happy and trust the staff to respond promptly to any concerns.

The well-being team meets regularly to discuss pupils' needs and adapt provision, as necessary. They ensure that staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities in promoting pupils' well-being. They know the pupils very well and use their knowledge, along with a range of relevant data, to provide them with appropriate help and support. This includes purposeful interventions that support vulnerable pupils effectively. The Hafan provides support that is tailored well to support pupils with their emotional and social needs. This includes developing the pupils' basic skills and offering purposeful support to enable pupils to engage in the life and work of the school.

During the pandemic, the fall in attendance was less than that seen nationally. The attendance of primary-age pupils has increased gradually since then and is approaching the levels seen in 2018-2019. The attendance rates of secondary-age pupils have not improved to the same degree and have declined over the past three years. Persistent absences have increased over the same period. Leaders act appropriately by monitoring pupils' attendance and respond in a timely manner when concerns arise. The school promotes the importance of good attendance regularly and uses rewards suitably to encourage pupils to attend regularly. There is a range of graduated interventions to identify and overcome barriers to attendance. These include working with families, the local authority, and relevant agencies in a timely manner. However, these interventions do not always have an effect on the attendance of secondary-age pupils in particular, and the attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals remains slightly lower than the attendance of their peers.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. All staff are given regular training on safeguarding issues, including how to respond to concerns, prevent radicalisation and identify abuse. There are robust systems in place to record and respond to any concerns and the school works closely with external agencies to provide pupils with

timely support, where necessary. These arrangements contribute effectively to a positive culture of safeguarding across the school, and most pupils feel safe.

Leaders have a good understanding of the needs of pupils with ALN. They hold regular meetings and work purposefully with staff, parents, and external agencies to discuss the needs of these pupils and decide on the most suitable interventions for them. By scrutinising work and using information from pupil assessments, leaders track the progress of pupils with ALN appropriately. In the best practices, additional support lays a firm foundation for these pupils and supports them effectively to develop their skills over time. However, activities within learning sessions do not always meet the needs of pupils with ALN effectively enough. Over time, this limits development in the skills of a minority of pupils with ALN.

Most pupils value the range of extra-curricular opportunities that are available to develop their personal and social skills, in addition to those that develop their leadership skills. These include the variety of clubs and residential trips that engage their interest successfully. Pupils who are members of committees benefit from valuable opportunities to influence aspects of the school's life and work. For example, members of the well-being committee raise their fellow pupils' awareness of the importance of mental health effectively during whole-school assemblies.

Leading and improving

The headteacher is a dedicated leader who places a clear emphasis on well-being, respect and creating a sense of belonging. She is passionate about ensuring that Ysgol Bro Idris is a happy school. With the support of an enthusiastic and energetic team of senior leaders across the school's numerous sites, she fosters a strong sense of community and ensures that the school operates as one all-age organisation. Leaders' roles and responsibilities are distributed appropriately and there is a robust ethos of teamwork across the school.

Leaders have clear processes for evaluating the school's performance. This includes regular activities that give leaders useful opportunities to work together across age groups and sites. Evaluation activities are based usefully on considering first-hand evidence, such as scrutinising work and observing teaching and learning. However, leaders tend to concentrate too much on complying with the school's policies, procedures, and expectations. On the whole, leaders do not evaluate the effect of provision on the development of pupils' subject skills and progress effectively enough. As a result, the findings of self-evaluation activities are not robust enough to identify a few important areas for improvement.

Although leaders often identify suitable broad strategic priorities, overall, the steps they identify to make the necessary improvements are not incisive enough. They are not

specific enough to explain what key staff are required to achieve, particularly in terms of changes to pedagogy. Where leaders have identified correctly that improvements are needed in specific areas, the actions taken do not always lead to change quickly enough.

Leaders at different levels hold regular discussions with staff, which contributes successfully to ensuring that practical arrangements across the sites are co-ordinated effectively. They hold useful briefing sessions and discussions about upcoming events, issues relating to the sites, staffing, and individual pupils' needs. However, these arrangements do not give enough attention to some important issues, such as the features of effective teaching and the effect of this on standards.

The school has suitable arrangements for reviewing staff's professional development. Relevant leaders co-ordinate suitable professional development opportunities for staff, giving due attention to the school's priorities, particularly to support pupils' well-being. In a few instances, these opportunities have an appropriate influence on specific aspects of teaching, such as strengthening the prompts to motivate pupils at the beginning of sessions. Leaders work purposefully in partnership with other schools; for example, they have recently begun to work together to improve aspects of provision, including pupils' reading skills.

In general, leaders place a suitable emphasis on national priorities. There is a clear and successful emphasis on promoting the Welsh language and the school prioritises alleviating the effects of poverty. The pupil development grant is used purposefully to reduce barriers to learning and ensure that pupils from low-income families are given equitable opportunities to take part in all aspects of school life. The school has a good knowledge of pupils' needs through close working relationships with pupils and their families and provides a wide range of targeted support. This includes support with school uniform, learning resources and ingredients for food lessons, in addition to opportunities to learn to play a musical instrument.

On the whole, governors challenge and support the school suitably. They act appropriately as critical friends and work diligently through a suitable range of sub-committees. One example that shows how governors have supported senior leaders to achieve change effectively is the procedure that was revised recently for managing the use of mobile phones. This has contributed to a measurable reduction in the number of pupils who are excluded as a result of inappropriate behaviour. Governors understand their role in promoting healthy eating and drinking. Although there is a significant surplus in the budget, governors do not scrutinise the school's financial position regularly or rigorously enough.

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.

Although there is a significant surplus in the budget, governors do not scrutinise the school's financial position regularly or rigorously enough.

Leaders and governors make purposeful 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 (www.estyn.gov.wales)

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