



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Ysgol Beca
Efailwen
Clunderwen
SA66 7UX**

Date of inspection: June 2018

by

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

About Ysgol Beca

Ysgol Beca is situated in the village of Efailwen in the west of the county of Carmarthenshire. There are 63 pupils between 4 and 11 years old on roll. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes.

Over the last three years, around 4% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. This is significantly lower than the national percentage of 19%. A majority of pupils note that they speak Welsh at home. Welsh is the school's everyday language and the medium of teaching and learning. The school has identified that 18% of pupils have additional learning needs, which is slightly lower than the national average of 21%. The headteacher has been in post since 2009 and has been the headteacher of a nearby school since 2013. The school was last inspected in December 2012.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

The pupils' voice is prominent in the school's work and contributes successfully towards their wellbeing and learning. Teachers plan a wide range of interesting and stimulating learning experiences that engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm. As a result, nearly all pupils show a positive attitude towards their learning. Provision to develop pupils' skills is embedded firmly and the principles of the foundation phase are firmly in place. As a result, pupils across the school use their skills successfully in a wide range of practical activities.

The school has a communal Welsh ethos. There is a good partnership between parents and the school, which ensures that they play a full part in their child's education. Pupils are polite and very caring towards each other, and show pride when talking about their community.

The headteacher and governors provide a clear strategic direction for the school's work. They have a sound vision that is based on maintaining and raising standards. By using a wide range of robust evaluation activities, leaders have rigorous knowledge of standards and provision.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Excellent
Teaching and learning experiences	Excellent
Care, support and guidance	Excellent
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

R1 Ensure regular opportunities for foundation phase pupils to write independently

What happens next

The school will produce 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 the effect of a creative and practical curriculum on pupils' standards and independence, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

On entry to the school on a full-time basis, a majority of pupils have basic skills that are appropriate for their age. During their time at the school, nearly all pupils make sound progress from their starting points, including those with additional learning needs. They build on previous learning successfully and apply their thinking skills and problem-solving skills regularly across a range of areas of learning.

Most pupils across the school treat the Welsh language with respect and use natural spoken language and the area's rich dialect with pride when talking to staff, visitors and peers. Most pupils pronounce clearly. This is one of the school's strengths. In the foundation phase, most pupils have good communication skills. They listen attentively and discuss their work confidently, by using robust syntax and purposeful vocabulary in a range of contexts, for example when discussing the life cycle of a butterfly as part of their theme work. Many pupils' reading skills in the foundation phase are developing well. By the end of the phase, many are confident readers. A few more able pupils read meaningfully and are very willing to express an opinion about the content of the text.

In key stage 2, most pupils build on their oracy skills successfully. They take pride in their Welshness and their local area. Most speak Welsh completely naturally, for example when discussing and comparing the features of Welsh rivers. They are able to express themselves maturely in both languages. A notable example of this is when pupils discuss how they designed, created and evaluated a model aeroplane as part of their technology work. Most pupils in key stage 2 read very maturely in both languages. By the end of the stage, they read with fluency and a sound understanding of the text. They are able to recall relevant facts when discussing their favourite characters. Most pupils use their higher order reading skills successfully to gather information from different sources, for example when gathering information about the life of Anne Frank during the Second World War.

In terms of their writing skills, in the foundation phase, many pupils develop their ideas sensibly in line with their age and ability. With support, many spell familiar words correctly, and use idioms and similes purposefully to enrich their work. A few pupils write freely to a good standard, for example through creative stories, diaries and when responding to 'dydd Llun llanast' (messy Monday) tasks. However, over-reliance on writing frames limits a minority of pupils' ability to write independently regularly, particularly in the foundation phase. In key stage 2, many pupils' writing skills are developed well. They write correctly in a range of forms. By the end of the stage, they write confidently in both languages, for example when writing a newspaper article to discuss the effect of increasing the cost of the Severn Bridge toll, and when writing a portrayal of Gelert in English. This develops pupils' translanguaging skills well.

Most pupils' numeracy skills across the school are sound. Most pupils in the foundation phase show a skilful understanding of number bonds. They count confidently, recognise shapes and handle data effectively. By the end of the phase, most apply their skills independently, for example when measuring objects by using

correct standard units, and when using different coins to buy milk from the class shop. In key stage 2, most pupils solve number problems confidently. They recall number facts quickly and apply what they have learnt in mathematics lessons confidently in real-life situations. Notable examples are the confident way in which older pupils solve problems as they organise and calculate the cost of a journey around Eritrea.

Nearly all pupils across the school show confidence when discussing information and communication technology (ICT) work. They use a variety of ICT programs regularly across the curriculum. In the foundation phase, most pupils use word-processing programs, a branching database and graphics programs confidently and independently, for example when sorting insects by their properties. In key stage 2, most pupils use ICT skilfully and independently in a variety of wider contexts. For example, when using a control package to design a Celtic patterns, and when using a program to gather information about the features of Welsh rivers and presenting their findings in a database.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Pupils play a prominent and comprehensive role in the school's strategic work. Through the successful work of the school councils, pupils have a strong influence on attendance, health and wellbeing within the school. Pupils contribute well towards improving attendance. They understand their duties clearly in promoting and maintaining high standards of attendance, for example by collecting and interpreting whole-school attendance data. Pupils undertake their responsibilities within a wide range of school councils enthusiastically and maturely. A notable example is the effect of the 'Twm Tanllyd' group to promote the use of the Welsh language across the school, and the contribution of the 'Digital Wizards' to develop pupils' ICT skills. This contributes successfully towards improving pupils' language and ICT skills.

Nearly all pupils show a very positive attitude towards learning. They show a high level of motivation and persevere to work independently for extended periods. They enjoy lessons and show enthusiasm in their learning. Nearly all pupils work confidently and effectively in pairs or groups, and use appropriate strategies to overcome difficulties, when necessary. They show willingness to support their peers in group activities. This develops their co-operation skills very successfully.

Nearly all pupils' standards of behaviour are exceptionally good. They treat their peers, staff and visitors with respect and courtesy. A communal atmosphere and an ethos of respect are strengths at the school, which leads to high standards of wellbeing and behaviour.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of making healthy choices in terms of diet and taking part in physical activities. This has been reinforced successfully as pupils chose exercise equipment that is used within the school and the wider community. Excellent use is made of the outdoor areas and excellent resources regularly, which has a very positive effect on pupils' health and wellbeing.

Teaching and learning experiences: Excellent

One of the school's exceptional features is the way in which the staff provide a broad and balanced curriculum, which challenges and supports pupils very effectively in a creative and stimulating way. Teachers provide very extensive opportunities for pupils to contribute to lessons. As a result, pupils show enthusiasm in their work and play an active role in guiding their own learning.

The school has a good range of effective schemes of work, which ensure that the foundation phase's areas of learning, the requirements of the curriculum and the needs of the agreed syllabus for religious education receive full attention. By working very effectively with a nearby school, the school has created a stimulating practical curriculum that has a very positive effect on pupils' attitudes towards learning. Pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are developed naturally as an integral part of planning. These interesting plans and experiences ensure that pupils' skills are developed very successfully in all areas of learning. However, there are not regular enough opportunities for the school's youngest pupils to write independently.

Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking skills in a wide range of practical contexts across the curriculum. This contributes very effectively to the development of pupils' independent learning skills. As a result, most pupils develop as creative and confident learners. The school ensures rich opportunities to develop pupils' awareness of the local area's culture and Welsh traditions regularly.

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan a full and rich range of interesting learning experiences for pupils. By forging a very effective working relationship with pupils, staff create a supportive and stimulating learning environment, which ensures that pupils achieve in line with their ability. The school's resources are used very effectively to enrich this. All of this engages pupils' interest and enthusiasm in their learning, and ensures that they apply themselves fully to their work. Teachers' presentations are interesting and practical, and they challenge most pupils very effectively. Teachers question pupils skilfully to extend their knowledge and understanding and, at times, challenge them to think and reason their answers at a higher level. Staff model polished spoken language, which has a positive effect on pupils' oral Welsh skills.

Teachers provide pupils with sound oral and written feedback in order for them to know how well they are achieving and what they need to do in order to improve. Pupils are given regular opportunities to reflect on their work and make improvements. Assessments are used purposefully to inform the next steps in their learning.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school succeeds in promoting Welsh culture and heritage very successfully. The Welsh ethos within the school community spreads further to the local area. As a result, pupils show pride in their Welshness. The numerous creative opportunities that pupils are given to visit centres in the local area, in addition to singing 'cerdd dant' and competing in eisteddfodau, are a strong feature. This reinforces pupils' awareness of their Welsh heritage very successfully, and develops pupils' expressive and social skills effectively.

There is a highly supportive relationship between parents and the school. Parents are informed regularly about the school's activities and events, and a number of evenings are held for them to explain current developments, for example in order to teach parents about the new curriculum and the literacy, numeracy and digital competence frameworks. This ensures the parents' valuable involvement in their children's education.

The school listens to parents' views and responds supportively to their ideas. The parent-teacher association supports this successfully as they raise money to purchase resources, such as technological equipment and to develop the extensive outdoor area. This has led to valuable opportunities for pupils to study the environment as part of their class work.

The school has successful procedures to track pupils' progress and monitor their wellbeing. Teachers use the information that derives from this intelligently to plan improvement steps for pupils. Teachers acknowledge the importance of early intervention and provide caring support for individuals and groups of pupils. They work closely with a variety of external agencies in order to provide valuable support to pupils with additional learning needs. As a result, there are effective plans with clear and measurable targets in order to support individuals to achieve very soundly. Staff support pupils with emotional and social needs skilfully and provide purposeful support programmes for them.

The school has sound procedures to promote healthy eating and drinking. As a result, most pupils have good knowledge of what they need to do to stay healthy. Beneficial opportunities, in addition to a wide range of purposeful outdoor resources for exercise sessions, contribute successfully towards pupils' wellbeing. Specialist fitness sessions, such as taekwondo and yoga, support this well.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development very successfully. Staff encourage pupils to be responsible citizens who are willing to help others and raise money for charities. The school council and eco group promote the pupil's voice well. As a result, it succeeds in raising pupils' awareness of the right of the child. A notable example of this is the pupils' contribution towards establishing a reflection area on the school grounds, which contributes well towards developing their wellbeing.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding children meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher has a robust and clear vision that is based on raising standards and promoting pupils' wellbeing and Welshness. He shares this vision very successfully with staff, pupils, governors and the wider community.

Members of staff work together very effectively, fulfil their roles and support the headteacher conscientiously. They are given responsibility for leading specific aspects of the school's work, which focus clearly on maintaining and raising pupils' standards. A good example is the way in which leaders give status to the Welsh language and develop pupils' spoken language from an early age.

The school's self-evaluation procedures are based firmly on a wide range of first-hand evidence. This includes lesson observations, scrutiny of books and conducting learning walks on specific aspects. As a result, leaders know their school well. They consider and respond to pupils' comments regularly. For example, aspects of the curriculum have been adapted to ensure rich and creative opportunities that have led to good standards in the arts and pupils' independence.

There is a close link between the school's priorities for improvement and the findings of self-evaluation. The school development plan includes specific and clear priorities. Leaders review progress against previous priorities each year, and the school shows consistent continuous progress over time.

Leaders ensure that staff are given relevant opportunities to develop professionally, for example by sharing good practice with staff from a nearby school to plan tasks within the requirements of the new curriculum. This contributes very effectively towards planning activities and lessons that engage pupils' enthusiasm towards their learning. As a result, the quality of teaching and provision is up-to-date and robustly good across the school.

Leaders use their resources very effectively. The headteacher and governing body manage the budget carefully. They monitor the effect of expenditure of pupils' outcomes and ensure that it links well with the school's priorities for improvement, including the use of specific grants.

Governors are very supportive of the school and contribute directly to the self-evaluation procedures, by listening to pupils, conducting learning walks, analysing data and scrutinising books. As a result, they have a robustly good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They challenge the school continuously and hold the school to account for its performance successfully.

Copies of the report

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

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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