



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

A report on

**Ysgol Pen-y-bryn
Bethesda
Gwynedd
LL57 3BE**

Date of inspection: February 2018

by

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

About Ysgol Pen-y-bryn

Ysgol Pen-y-bryn is situated in the town of Bethesda in Gwynedd. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work, but English is taught as a subject and a medium of learning occasionally. There are 125 pupils between 7 and 11 years old on roll. Since January 2017, the school has federated with Ysgol Abercaseg, which is situated in the same town.

Over a period of three years, a little over 14% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. This is lower than the national percentage of 19%. Seventy-two per cent (72%) of pupils speak Welsh at home and very few are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The school has identified a little over 17% of pupils as having additional learning needs, but very few have a statement of special educational needs. The percentage with additional learning needs is slightly lower than the national percentage of 21%. Very few pupils are looked after by the local authority.

The headteacher was appointed to the post permanently in April 2004 and the school was last inspected in January 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 leaders of this successful school have a clear vision that is based on providing education of a high standard for its pupils. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and provide interesting learning experiences for them, which enable nearly all pupils to make progress that is at least good, particularly in their oral Welsh skills. The school provides broad opportunities for pupils to shoulder leadership roles successfully, which prepares them well to be responsible members of their community.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Provide specific opportunities for pupils to apply their writing, numeracy and technology skills independently in different contexts
- R2 Share more good practice across the two schools in the federation

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 how pupils share information about the school's strategic development with their peers, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

A majority of pupils transfer to the school with Welsh communication and mathematical skills that are higher than expected. During their time there, nearly all, including those with additional learning needs, the very few who are looked after by the local authority, and those who are more able, make progress that is at least good.

Nearly all pupils listen attentively to teachers' presentations and each other's points of view. They speak correctly in Welsh and English, and express an opinion on their work extremely maturely. They include appropriate idioms and phrases skilfully in their conversations, particularly in Welsh. Nearly all pupils who are latecomers from English-medium schools make very good progress in their oral Welsh skills. Most pupils' translanguaging skills are developing increasingly successfully, and they are a core part of their work in various subjects.

Nearly all pupils' reading skills are developing soundly. Nearly all of the key stage's younger pupils use various strategies successfully to build unfamiliar words. At the top of the school, nearly all pupils vary their tone of voice appropriately when reading aloud, and understand fully what they are reading. They talk maturely about the content of their reading books and describe the characters and plot skilfully.

Nearly all pupils' writing skills are developing well in both languages. They write for a purpose in a variety of styles, and include idioms and other sayings in the text, where appropriate. However, they stick too strictly to detailed guidelines that are provided by teachers to enable them to gain confidence when writing independently. With continuous guidance, they write extended pieces in different areas of the curriculum. For example, Year 4 pupils write a letter from the perspective of an evacuee to their mother in both languages when studying the Second World War in history. Year 6 pupils write a debate on current themes, such as 'Should smoking be banned completely' as part of their work on healthy living, and portrayals of characters from Penrhyn Quarry as part of their historical studies.

Nearly all pupils' mathematical skills are developing very well. They have the ability to calculate and solve number problems maturely in their heads in various mathematical contexts. Most pupils use their mathematical skills confidently in different contexts, such as analysing data and presenting it in the form of a graph to record their study of thermal insulators in science. However, many pupils do not always do so at the same high level in cross-curricular activities as they do in mathematics lessons.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of staying safe on the internet, and create posters and letters to reinforce their knowledge of this. They use word processing programs effectively to present their work, and edit it where appropriate. They create electronic presentations fairly confidently to convey information about themes such as popular sports or the organs of the body. They use 'QR' codes confidently to add information for readers about various themes. They analyse data and use spreadsheets with increasing confidence in a range of different contexts. Pupils occasionally choose a theme from a limited range to practice their information and communication technology (ICT) skills to create electronic presentations to convey the principles of Fair Trade.

Nearly all pupils take part in enterprise projects regularly, such as cooking delicacies for the Christmas Fair, in addition to planning packaging to wrap them. These cross-curricular projects provide a useful opportunity for pupils to combine a number of key skills and apply them successfully. However, there are few examples of where pupils take responsibility for planning these projects and implementing them completely independently, without significant input from teachers.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Nearly all pupils talk confidently and with pride about their school. They feel completely safe there. They are happy to discuss any problems they have with members of staff, and trust that they will provide them with support, if necessary. Nearly all pupils behave extremely politely in lessons and around the school, and treat each other, staff and visitors with respect and courtesy.

One of the school's most positive features is the mature way in which more able pupils address the strategic priorities. In consultation with teachers, members of 'Grŵp Pesda', namely a group of more able pupils, discuss the school's priorities for improvement confidently, paraphrase them so that other pupils are able to understand them, and present them to their peers. They also give presentations to parents on this issue. They have recently introduced mental mathematics strategies to all pupils. This ensures that all pupils give priority to developing these skills continuously. Another good example is the mature way in which these pupils discuss the importance of continuity and progression in how the school develops ICT skills when transferring between the foundation phase at Ysgol Abercaseg and key stage 2 at this school.

Similarly, members of the school council operate very successfully to promote the use of the Welsh language in the school's daily life as part of the work on the Welsh language charter. Members of the council encourage their peers to use the language regularly, watch Welsh television programmes and listen to popular Welsh music. This helps to ensure that all pupils consider Welsh language activities as something 'cool' and has an extremely positive effect on their awareness of the importance of protecting the language.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily and they have a very sound awareness of the effect this has on the body. Nearly all pupils have a very effective understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet.

In lessons, nearly all pupils apply themselves to their work immediately and are ready to learn. They are extremely enthusiastic and work diligently on the tasks that are set for them. They talk confidently about their work and show pride and a mature knowledge of the content. Nearly all pupils work well with their peers, and support each other voluntarily. They listen to the views of others and wait patiently for their turn, for example when discussing and sorting historical objects. Nearly all pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work. They understand the correction code well and use it effectively to improve their own work and that of their peers. They use the wide range of visual support in their classes completely naturally to enable them to improve their work.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers engender pupils' interest well in their work. They have high expectations of all pupils and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of the content of the core subject study programmes successfully in interesting contexts. They structure tasks in great detail to ensure that all pupils succeed in all steps before proceeding to the next. For example, they give them detailed feedback on their effort to write one paragraph in a story before moving forward to write the next. As a result, with support, nearly all pupils produce written pieces of a high standard over time.

Most teachers use various questioning techniques skilfully to develop pupils' responses further, and to correct and extend their language. They are good language role models. Teachers share learning objectives clearly with pupils and prepare structured guidelines to guide them through each step of the task. They use a variety of methods and resources to challenge all groups of pupils, including those with additional learning needs and the most able, to achieve to the best of their ability. As a result, all pupils develop their Welsh, English, mathematical, scientific and technological skills effectively within a specific structure which is based on programmes of study. However, opportunities for pupils to apply these skills completely independently and naturally across the curriculum, and in projects of their own choosing, are limited.

Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively and treat all pupils equally, by treating them with the appropriate respect. They work efficiently with support staff to support pupils' learning successfully. Most, in turn, question pupils skilfully and encourage them to succeed in their tasks.

Teachers' oral and written feedback is effective and helps pupils to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The school has an agreed marking code, which is known to staff and pupils and used by them effectively. It enables pupils to assess their own performance and that of other pupils skilfully, where appropriate. However, teachers have a tendency to over-direct pupils, which hinders their ability to record their work wholly independently.

The school provides wide-ranging learning experiences for pupils, which engage their interest well and motivate them to learn. Through detailed planning, teachers ensure that tasks are suitable for the range of ability and that there are good opportunities for pupils to build successfully on previous learning. Teachers are beginning to plan activities by considering the requirements of the Areas of Learning and Experience within the Curriculum for Wales. However, there is little evidence that pupils guide their own learning by using their linguistic, mathematical and technological skills to undertake real tasks wholly independently.

Learning experiences are enriched further by inviting visitors to share experiences with pupils and by organising visits to the local area and beyond. For example, pupils visit Cardiff when studying Welsh history and culture, and the local slate museum when reading a novel based on Penrhyn Quarry.

Nurturing pupils' pride in their Welshness, Welsh culture and the advantages of being bilingual, is at the heart of all of the school's life and work. Through the curriculum and Welsh language charter activities, pupils' literacy skills and their understanding of the culture of Wales and their local area are developing successfully.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school promotes the importance of good pupils' behaviour, courtesy and commitment very successfully. As a result, nearly all pupils are well behaved, polite and respectful towards each other and visitors, and are conscientious learners.

Staff know the pupils and their families well and they have a sound and effective relationship with them. Staff share information about the school's activities with parents regularly through newsletters and curricular evenings. This enables parents to support their children's work successfully.

The school supports pupils with emotional, health and social difficulties very well. Purposeful intervention programmes are used successfully to support these pupils and improve their behaviour, where appropriate.

The school provides a number of effective opportunities for pupils to express their opinions and shoulder responsibility. For example, being a member of the 'Plant Pesda' group, the school council, eco committee, 'bydis buarth' (playground buddies) and the 'dreigiau doeth' (wise dragons), provides rich opportunities for pupils to take their responsibilities seriously and influence the school's work effectively. They are given an opportunity to deal with elements that relate to the school's everyday life, in addition to educational and management issues. This adds to their sense of ownership of the school and develops their understanding of citizenship effectively.

The school provides a comprehensive personal and social education scheme for pupils, which nurtures aspects such as respect, tolerance and equality effectively. Welcoming various visitors to the school to discuss issues, such as fair trade, also ensures that pupils receive a great deal of useful information about important issues. A police officer is a regular visitor and teaches pupils how to stay safe in the community, on the internet and about the dangers of substance misuse.

The school has effective arrangements for tracking pupils' progress. This enables teachers to gain current information about pupils' progress and attainment in order to be able to target support for individuals and specific groups of pupils quickly. As a result, provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good. All pupils with additional learning needs have a purposeful individual development plan, in addition to clear and definite targets. Staff use these effectively as they plan appropriate interventions for them. Support staff are aware of specific pupils' improvement targets and support them conscientiously to achieve them. This enables nearly all pupils to make good progress in their literacy and numeracy skills. The school works successfully with various agencies, such as the educational psychologist and the health service, to provide specialist and purposeful support for pupils who need it.

The school has appropriate arrangements for eating and drinking healthily, which encourage nearly all pupils to make sensible choices.

Teachers plan successful activities to develop pupils' awareness and appreciation of Welsh history and heritage. For example, they study the strike at Penrhyn Quarry, the Aberfan disaster and the history of the Welsh language over the centuries to the present day. As a result, most pupils have a good understanding of their community's history and Welsh culture. By taking part in eisteddfodau, most pupils are given valuable opportunities to engage in the creative arts.

The school has procedures and policies that ensure that provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Staff organise valuable opportunities for pupils to reflect in assemblies and during circle time. For example, the whole school reflected on racial fairness following a presentation on the history of Martin Luther King by pupils in Year 6.

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

Leadership and management: Good

Leaders have a clear vision that is based on providing education of a high standard for pupils, which encourages them to nurture the skills and understanding that are needed to become responsible members of their community. For over a year, the headteacher has developed her role robustly as the leader of the federation. The agreed vision for the federation is shared appropriately with pupils, staff and members of the governing body. The deputy headteacher and teachers support the headteacher skilfully by taking responsibility for developing aspects of the school's life and work, such as literacy and numeracy, effectively. This has a positive effect on pupils' standards, particularly their numeracy and oracy skills. Leaders are now beginning to share good practice that is seen in the two schools with each other to develop consistency in provision. A notable example includes sharing methods for learning to read, including providing advice in the form of a video for parents to support their children at home. This is beginning to have a positive effect on provision and pupils' outcomes, in addition to developing teachers' leadership skills effectively. However, the federation is in its early stages and these practices have not been developed in full across both schools.

All members of staff have a sound understanding of their roles, and they meet regularly to discuss provision, outcomes and pupils' wellbeing. They show a strong commitment to developing and promoting further improvements by implementing a number of purposeful strategies, such as improving pupils' oracy and ICT skills. A strong sense of teamwork ensures that everyone works together effectively to fulfil the school's vision successfully.

Since establishing the governing body, governors have worked effectively with the headteacher to develop purposeful procedures to help them to gain a clear overview of the working life of both schools. Regular meetings and frequent information in the form of reports from the headteacher and other leaders, ensure that they have a sound knowledge of the school's performance, which enables them to support the school and hold it to account for its performance successfully. In order to enrich this further, governors visit the school in turn in order to work with leaders and staff to scrutinise books, discuss with staff and pupils, and conduct beneficial learning walks. A good example of this is the learning walk across both schools to learn more about pupils' writing development from the nursery to Year 6. This ensures that they have a clear overview of the work of both schools.

There are purposeful procedures for the self-evaluation of core elements of the school's life and work. Leaders make effective use of the analysis of performance data, the findings of book scrutiny and also gather the views of parents and pupils. They make good use of the views of other strategic partners who visit the school,

including the local authority and headteachers of local schools. Overall, the self-evaluation report is purposeful and provides a clear picture of the school's life and work. There is a strong link between the outcomes of that report and the priorities in the school development plan. This plan focuses firmly on improving standards and identifies staff responsibilities clearly. All staff take part in evaluating progress against the priorities and are very aware of their responsibilities to achieve the targets.

The school has an appropriate number of qualified staff to deliver the curriculum. Overall, leaders take advantage of staff expertise appropriately, for example as teachers exchange classes to teach art and music. Arrangements for managing staff performance are effective and set beneficial objectives to develop their skills and understanding of issues that are based on the school's priorities. As a result, all staff are given appropriate opportunities to develop professionally in line with their personal needs and those of the school.

The headteacher and governors manage expenditure carefully. Efficient use is made of the pupil development grant to support specific pupils in areas such as literacy and numeracy, in addition to providing musical instrument lessons.

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.

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