



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

A report on

Ysgol Bro Alun

**Delamere Avenue
Gwersyllt
Wrexham
LL11 4NG**

Date of inspection: June 2022

by

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

About Ysgol Bro Alun

Name of provider	Ysgol Bro Alun
Local authority	Wrexham County Borough Council
Language of the provider	Welsh-medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	276
Pupils of statutory school age	198
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	43
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 21.3%)</i>	11.2%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 22.2%)</i>	12.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	34.3%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	January 2013
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Additional information	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different from those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website:
mylocalschool.gov.wales

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- a) The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

The headteacher and other leaders at Ysgol Bro Alun succeed in realising their vision to provide a caring, supportive, happy and safe environment for pupils. This in turn allows most pupils to develop their self-confidence and self-discipline. They are supported effectively by dedicated teachers and support staff who support pupils to develop a range of skills appropriately in a proud Welsh environment. As a result, many pupils make sound progress.

Ysgol Bro Alun is a happy school where nearly all pupils treat each other, staff and visitors with courtesy and respect. Pupils behave well, on the whole, and are ready to undertake their class work enthusiastically. Staff have a good understanding of pupils' needs and, through joint planning, they prepare stimulating and interesting activities that engage pupils' interest. However, the level of challenge is not always appropriate for pupils, particularly in the school's upper years.

In the early years, pupils make good progress in their language, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. They talk confidently to their teachers about their work and enjoy taking part in a variety of interesting activities that are provided for them in the outdoor areas. As they move through the school, pupils continue to make sound progress in their skills; however, they do not make the best possible progress in their literacy and numeracy skills while working across the curriculum.

Ysgol Bro Alun is federated with another local primary school, Ysgol Plas Coch. They share the same governing body and the same headteacher, who divides his time between both sites. The governing body discharges its duties diligently, for example by conducting site visits, and governors have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. As a federation, leaders take advantage of a few opportunities to co-operate, for example when senior leaders evaluate lessons and standards in books across both sites. However, leaders do not always consider the findings of their monitoring activities incisively enough when planning for improvement. Beyond senior leader level, the federation arrangement does not have much of an effect on the day-to-day running of the school.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve pupils' standards of literacy and numeracy, particularly at the top of the school
- R2 Ensure an appropriate level of challenge for pupils, particularly at the top of the school
- R3 Strengthen strategic planning processes to prioritise the most important steps for improving pupils' outcomes

What happens next

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

Main findings

Learning

On entry to the school, most pupils' Welsh language skills are lower than expected. During their time at the school, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make sound progress, on the whole. However, many pupils at the top of the school do not achieve to the best of their ability.

Across the school, most pupils listen attentively to each other's ideas and when following adults' instructions. In the school's early years, many pupils communicate confidently in Welsh when sharing their ideas with their teachers. In the nursery class, they respond appropriately to adults' instructions by using a range of purposeful vocabulary to convey their ideas. By the end of Year 2, they are happy to talk about their work and experiences, for example when discussing different types of insects they have identified in the local area. As they move through the school, most pupils use polished and accurate Welsh and English when asking and responding to questions and discussing their work with their teachers. They are willing to share their ideas and speak Welsh in formal situations when adults are present. However, a minority of pupils' oral Welsh skills are not in line with their age and ability from their starting points. Many are too willing to turn to English in lessons and at informal times.

Many pupils make sound progress in their reading skills across the school. The youngest pupils recognise sounds and letters correctly and begin to recognise words confidently. By the end of Year 2, many pupils read meaningfully with tone and expression and discuss the content of their books confidently. As they move through the school, many pupils' reading skills develop well in both languages. In Year 4, pupils practise their higher-order reading skills regularly and use them maturely to gather information from different sources. A good example of this is pupils' work when learning about the Welsh people's journey on the Mimosa to Patagonia.

In the school's early years, most pupils develop sound writing skills. In the nursery class, they enjoy using a range of writing implements to experiment with early mark-making. By the end of the reception class, many pupils' writing skills are developing soundly. They write a range of vocabulary in context, for example when describing a picture of a busy town as part of their termly theme. In Years 1 and 2, many pupils expand their ideas effectively, for example by writing a series of instructions on how to live on the international space station. As they move through the school, their writing skills develop increasingly well. By Year 4, many pupils write a series of clear sentences that develop their ideas clearly, for example in a diary entry of a school child in Capel Celyn on their last day at school. By Year 6, many pupils write with increasing accuracy in a range of different genres, for example when writing a newspaper report describing the excitement of Wrexham Football Club after being bought by Hollywood stars. However, most pupils at the top of the school do not develop their literacy skills in other areas across the curriculum.

In the nursery and reception classes, many pupils solve simple problems in practical and interactive situations, which include understanding ordinals, counting in 2s, 5s and 10s and adding one-digit numbers. They compare and order numbers at least up

to 10. By the end of Year 2, most pupils read the time on an analogue clock correctly and respond to real-life problems relating to time. They use the correct units, for example when measuring the length of different objects and calculating the capacity of cups. As pupils move through the school, many build appropriately on their previous learning in terms of their mathematical understanding. At the top of the school, a majority of pupils complete their mathematics work at an appropriate level. However, pupils do not apply the numeracy skills they learn in mathematics lessons regularly enough across the wider aspects of the curriculum and activities do not always challenge them to achieve as well as they could.

Many pupils' ICT skills are developing well. By the end of Year 2, they apply their skills successfully, for example when controlling a programmable device as part of their numeracy work or when creating graphs to show who lives in their homes. As they move through the school, most pupils' skills build firmly on this foundation. They use digital equipment successfully, for example when using a coding program to create a journey to Alyn Waters Country Park or when recording a script for the rest of the school to explain the developments in the forest school.

At time, pupils benefit from valuable opportunities to develop their creative skills, for example by using a wide range of natural materials to emulate the work of a guest artist. They learn a wide range of songs and nursery rhymes that develop their oral skills appropriately.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Ysgol Bro Alun is a friendly and homely community. Pupils greet each other, staff and visitors to the school politely and respectfully. They are welcoming and very willing to discuss aspects of school life with adults. Pupils are proud of their school and many enjoy their time there. Most pupils feel safe at school and feel that they are respected and treated fairly.

Overall, most pupils are well-behaved as they work in their classes and play happily together during break time and lunchtime. They understand well the purpose of class rules and the school's reward systems. Most pupils apply themselves enthusiastically to undertake challenges that encourage them to work independently and, on the whole, they persevere to complete their work. They show an interest in their work, the contributions of their fellow pupils and the information that is presented by their teachers. Overall, they respond appropriately to their teachers' oral feedback. In a few cases, pupils choose to complete basic tasks or are too dependent on adult support to solve a problem, which means that they do not challenge themselves as well as they could.

Most pupils have an appropriate understanding of the importance of making healthy choices in terms of food and drink. For example, the school's younger pupils enjoy learning about fruit and vegetables to create healthy drinks. The school's older pupils are enthusiastic when completing '*hwyl a heini*' ('fun and fit') challenges in the class, for example dancing, taking part in playground games and yoga.

Following the pandemic, pupils take pride in the recent opportunities to attend activities and clubs that promote their health and wellbeing. For example, pupils enjoy opportunities to attend a cooking club and wellbeing club where they planted

potatoes. Most pupils have an appropriate understanding of the importance of keeping themselves safe online.

Many pupils are developing well as ethical and knowledgeable citizens. The school's younger pupils show a sound understanding of what it means to be a good friend and treat others with respect. For example, pupils in the reception class consider the characteristics of a good friend when listening to the story of 'Siwgr' the purple puppet. Pupils also have an appropriate awareness of what it means to be a good citizen and a basic knowledge of children's rights. For example, the school's younger pupils write an e-mail to a local country park to provide suggestions on how dog walking rules could be implemented. Those pupils who are members of committees or councils are given beneficial opportunities to develop their leadership skills, for example by contributing to the work of the '*lleisiau llesiant*' (wellbeing voices) group and the digital wizards.

Following the pandemic, inspectors are not reporting on pupil attendance rates during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years. Instead, the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance will be reported on as part of inspection area 4.

Teaching and learning experiences

Teachers and staff have a strong working relationship with pupils throughout the school and treat them with respect, which helps pupils to gain confidence and demonstrate a healthy attitude to learning. Learning support assistants identify strengths, interests and the areas that pupils need to improve and use this information to encourage and support pupils' learning valuably.

Teachers have a good awareness of one of the school's main priorities to improve pupils' oral Welsh skills. Teachers provide purposeful activities that foster pupils' wider Welsh language skills, including beneficial opportunities for them to nurture communication skills, such as creating Welsh podcasts about their school. Teachers and support staff are good language models and encourage pupils to respond in Welsh regularly. This continues to strengthen pupils' oral Welsh skills appropriately, although there is still room to improve pupils' use of Welsh in informal situations, such as on the playground and when talking to each other in lessons.

Lessons have clear objectives and, on the whole, teachers plan a range of methods, activities and resources to engage pupils' interest appropriately. At the top of the school, learning experiences do not always challenge the full range of pupils to support them to make the best progress possible.

Many teachers provide pupils with useful feedback as they work. Teachers and support staff use various questioning techniques, on the whole, to extend and develop pupils' responses further and gain an idea of their understanding. In pupils' workbooks, teachers also provide feedback on the accuracy of their work and sometimes on the quality of the content, but this does not always help pupils to understand how to improve. Occasionally, teachers structure lessons and over-direct learning and this hinders pupils' creativity and independence.

Most teachers encourage pupils to contribute ideas and influence learning. For example, there are good opportunities across the school for pupils to contribute ideas through '*sbarduno'r syniadau*' (prompting ideas) sessions. These give pupils a better understanding of the area in question, which leads to creating inquiry questions and interesting research. Providing pupils with real-life experiences such as these is a good example of how teachers devise their planning and consider the four purposes and the areas of learning and improvement while preparing for the new Curriculum for Wales.

On the whole, teachers plan thoughtfully to provide opportunities for pupils to practise the skills they have learned in real-life situations, which are often linked to their subjects. However, planning at the top of the school does not always ensure that pupils' learning build cohesively on their previous knowledge to ensure progression as they move through the school. A good range of mathematical and language activities are provided for pupils; however, there are not enough opportunities for them to apply their numeracy and literacy skills across the curriculum.

The school has an attractive outdoor area, which provides an inspiring environment for pupils to learn. However, in a few classes, opportunities for pupils to learn outdoors are limited.

Care, support and guidance

Staff support the emotional, health and social needs of all pupils and adults successfully through a cross-section of purposeful activities. For example, by conducting discussion sessions and creating displays on aspects such as developing respect and care and shouldering responsibility, pupils are given suitable opportunities to express opinions and show empathy.

There is a dedicated room available for groups of vulnerable pupils where skills are developed to strengthen their self-image and self-confidence. Staff provide consistently good opportunities to prepare pupils to discuss their emotions openly, for example through an exciting activity where pupils place their hand on a colour-changing log to encourage them to discuss their concerns. They appreciate the conversations and this supportive assistance.

'*Lleisiau Lles*', the school's wellbeing club, operates effectively and members give successful guidance to the remaining pupils on how to keep their bodies and minds healthy. The school celebrates mental health week annually and pupils are given acceptable opportunities to think creatively about self-help methods. For example, they make a list of the characteristics that are needed to be a good friend and this has a positive effect on pupils' social skills and their relationships with each other.

The Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo) forges a professional relationship with parents. The school has a range of comprehensive provision that is used effectively when planning support to ensure routine, fairness and consistency for the pupil. Targets in individual education plans are relevant to pupils' wellbeing and learning needs. Recently, the ALNCo has set targets that support the pupil to make progress in skills. Pupils' progress is monitored and tracked successfully.

Pupils have recently participated appropriately in decisions that influence what they learn through the investigative 'inquiry-based learning' method, which gives a prominent place to the pupil's voice. The school council has been re-established after the pandemic and, on the whole, it provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to express an opinion.

The school promotes social and cultural development well. Teachers plan valuable opportunities for pupils to visit Alyn Waters Country Park regularly to expand their outdoor education provision. For example, teachers provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to scrutinise the life cycle of a frog, which prompted follow-up work at school. The school organises regular visits to the local community, for example by taking part in the St David's Day parade. The school also provides opportunities to welcome visitors to the school to enrich the curriculum. For example, teachers organised for theatre in education to visit the school to present the history of the voyage of the Mimosa. By doing so, these experiences deepen pupils' understanding of their identity, heritage and culture successfully.

Staff provide purposeful and stimulating activities that deepen pupils' understanding of global issues. For example, pupils learn about the effect of drought on foreign countries, such as Zimbabwe, and raise money for a project to ensure that clean water is available to the poor people of the world. While undertaking these activities, pupils are given beneficial opportunities to learn about people who are less fortunate than themselves and to be grateful for what they have. Pupils' spiritual and moral attitudes are promoted effectively through acts of collective worship and reflection sessions in the classes.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. Staff supervise pupils appropriately during leisure time. Staff have a sound awareness of safeguarding processes and leaders respond appropriately to individual cases, and work with other agencies effectively, where appropriate. The school has suitable procedures to support pupils with emotional needs, for example by providing sessions to discuss their feelings and opportunities for them to settle when they return to their lessons.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides effective leadership based on the school's vision to promote pupils' self-confidence and self-discipline. Alongside his deputy, he creates and maintains an effective team which, in turn, ensures that pupils make sound progress in a safe and caring environment. They promote and embed professional values, which sets a strong example for pupils. They are supported by governors who operate as valuable critical friends and provide the school with suitable support and challenge.

Leaders have effective procedures to evaluate the school's performance. This includes gathering a variety of first-hand evidence on several aspects of its work, including teaching and learning. Leaders provide teachers with valuable feedback following regular lesson observations and book scrutiny exercises. They receive useful individual targets as a result of rigorous performance management processes. Governors play an established part in self-evaluation procedures, such as conducting learning walks or listening to presentations that help them to develop their

understanding of the school's priorities for development. For example, governors benefit from input from members of the school council to expand their understanding of how they have developed their digital skills. Leaders give due attention to national priorities, such as preparing for the Curriculum for Wales and safeguarding pupils. Middle leaders have an increasing influence on teaching and learning in their departments. However, on the whole, leaders at all levels do not focus enough on the main findings of self-evaluation activities when planning for improvement. As a result, in a few areas, progress is not as quick as it could be.

Leaders manage resources appropriately. They ensure that the school makes suitable use of the budget, including any additional grants. For example, they employ staff to support pupils to regain their confidence and ability to speak Welsh following the COVID-19 lockdown periods. They also invest in staff training in areas relating to supporting pupils' wellbeing. Leaders provide a range of useful professional learning opportunities for teachers and support staff that align with the school's priorities for improvement. They work effectively with other schools. For example, they discuss resources and activities within their ICT cluster network and share examples of planning templates across the region. Leaders communicate effectively with parents, for example by using a digital app to share information.

Leaders promote healthy eating and drinking appropriately. For example, they provide opportunities for younger pupils to prepare and taste different vegetables in the classroom and score their favourite coloured pepper and provide cooking sessions for older pupils.

The headteacher spends around half of his time each week at the Ysgol Bro Alun site and the other half at the Ysgol Plas Coch site, and deputies are responsible for the sites in his absence. Leaders take advantage of occasional opportunities for staff and pupils to work together as part of the federation agreement. For example, staff attend training events jointly and older pupils are given opportunities to work together before transferring to secondary school.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body/members of the management committee 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, 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

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.

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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