



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

**A report on**

**Ysgol Y Manod**

**Blaenau Ffestiniog  
Gwynedd  
LL41 3AF**

**Date of inspection: May 2024**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh.**

## About Ysgol Y Manod

Name of provider	Ysgol Y Manod
Local authority	Cyngor Gwynedd
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	109
Pupils of statutory school age	82
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	14
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 23.7%)</i>	13.2%
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 13.2%)</i>	25.6%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	81.7%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/04/2024
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	17/02/2016
Start date of inspection	20/05/2024

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](https://mylocalschool.gov.wales)

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

## Overview

One of the notable qualities of Ysgol Y Manod is its caring and homely feel. All staff contribute successfully to creating a respectful and inclusive ethos. They are willing to listen to pupils' concerns and respond to them appropriately at all times.

Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make sound progress from their starting points. Those who are latecomers to the Welsh language gain the confidence to communicate quickly and make sound progress with the language. Staff provide a rich range of learning experiences that inspire and expand the horizons of most pupils. Pupils show a clear appreciation of the culture and history of the local area, along with pride in their school. The school has a distinct Welsh ethos.

The acting headteacher provides caring and purposeful leadership. He is supported firmly by staff and an intelligent governing body who have a clear overview of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. On the whole, the school's priorities derive from leaders' suitable knowledge of their school. However, processes for evaluating, planning and implementing improvement are not clear and specific enough.

Many pupils develop their skills robustly and their work is displayed and celebrated attractively around the school. However, progress in pupils' reading skills is limited. This hinders their ability to gather information from different texts and their enjoyment of reading. Staff have a sound understanding of each pupil's progress. Overall, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback independently to improve their work and assume more responsibility for their learning.

Throughout the school, in most lessons, pupils are dedicated and build on previous learning successfully. Most are prepared to discuss their views maturely with their peers and contribute their ideas successfully. However, pupils are not always given regular enough opportunities to play a leading part in contributing to the wider life and work of the school.

## Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen evaluation, planning and implementation processes to respond to the school's areas for improvement in a more specific and timely manner
- R2 Expand opportunities for pupils to respond to teachers' feedback independently to improve the quality of their work and make choices about how to present their learning
- R3 Develop pupils' reading skills
- R4 Strengthen opportunities for pupils to influence the life and work of the school

## 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, many pupils at Ysgol Y Manod have skills that are appropriate in terms of what is expected for their age and stage of development. As they mature, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make sound progress in their skills. They apply their knowledge and understanding of different areas purposefully to new contexts across the curriculum. A few pupils make very strong progress.

Over time, many pupils develop their oral skills suitably and use vocabulary that is specific to the Welsh language for different areas of the curriculum appropriately. Most of the youngest pupils communicate confidently in Welsh, using familiar words correctly. They are enthusiastic when discussing different themes in the learning areas and when talking about their experiences and interests. For example, they adapt their vocabulary and tone of voice purposefully in the shop when selling vegetables. The oldest pupils respond well to questions from their teachers and contribute productively to discussions. A minority of pupils explain and extend their responses effectively and express their opinions well in both languages. A few pupils express themselves maturely, using a wide and polished vocabulary. Across the school, nearly all pupils take pride in the Welsh language.

A majority of the youngest pupils develop early reading skills appropriately. By Year 2, they use phonic strategies increasingly effectively to build simple words, for example when reading and interpreting information to place the story of The Very Hungry Caterpillar in order. Many of the older pupils use a good range of strategies, such as scanning, successfully in both languages to find information from various texts. They analyse texts carefully to prepare for extended writing activities. For example, a majority of pupils in Years 5 and 6 interpret texts about the life of a child in the quarry and identify stylistic features to write an imaginary portrayal effectively. Many of the oldest pupils read aloud intelligently and with suitable expression in both languages. However, across the school, pupils do not develop their reading skills robustly enough.

As they move through the school, many pupils build on their writing skills successfully, presenting pieces for a variety of audiences and for different purposes. Many pupils in Years 5 and 6 write to a good standard in Welsh and English. They create factual and imaginative extended pieces, for example when writing a script that discusses aspects such as the drowning of Capel Celyn successfully. As pupils' skills develop, they use a good range of punctuation and spell more complex words with increasing accuracy.

Across the school, most pupils' number, shape and data-handling skills develop appropriately. The youngest pupils apply their skills to measure the volume of liquids well, for example when planning and making healthy drinks. Most pupils in Years 3 and 4 apply their numeracy skills in interesting contexts, which include analysing graphs on sea pollution to understand the effect of plastic waste on the environment. At the top of the school, most pupils use a wide range of methods well to solve real-life problems. For example, they elaborate on their thinking methods and reasoning skilfully when comparing the body mass of Welsh rugby players, explaining how this could show a high level of fat.

Across the school, a majority of pupils develop their digital skills suitably. The youngest pupils use programmable toys confidently to control and input instructions to find vegetables, for example. Many of the older pupils create presentations skilfully, for example when including voiceovers for their scripts. A majority of the oldest pupils create and use databases appropriately in a stimulating variety of learning topics. For example, they refine their skills to select data when discovering different ways of travelling past Parc Manod.

Many pupils develop their creative skills effectively. For example, the youngest pupils develop their skills imaginatively when emulating a famous piece of art by an Italian artist. Most of the oldest pupils work with different materials to create images that celebrate the local attractions of Blaenau Ffestiniog skilfully.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Nearly all pupils enjoy attending school and feel happy within its inclusive and caring environment. They feel safe at school and are confident that staff will listen to their concerns and support them appropriately. They show obvious pride in their school and value the diverse experiences that are provided for them. Nearly all pupils behave very well and treat each other and staff with obvious courtesy, care and respect.

Most pupils express their feelings confidently and are happy to share any concerns they have. They show a sound awareness of how to support their own well-being. For example, the youngest pupils identify how they feel in the morning and staff respond intelligently to any concerns or needs they may have. Most pupils develop as moral and informed citizens by showing a sound awareness of what it means to be a good friend, which makes a valuable contribution towards fostering the school's familial ethos. They have a sound understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe, including staying safe online. They apply this effectively when undertaking their learning activities.

Across the school, a majority of pupils have positive attitudes to learning and develop to become enterprising pupils who are ready to learn. Most recall facts and knowledge of previous learning successfully. As they learn, a majority of pupils show confidence and resilience and persevere with their work. They apply themselves conscientiously to their activities and persevere diligently to complete them. They work well together and concentrate on their activities for extended periods.

Most pupils respond firmly to opportunities to influence what they would like to learn, for example when planning themes about animals and the context of learning

activities relating to the 1960s. Most pupils have an interest and very positive attitudes when engaging with their learning. From an early age, pupils choose tasks effectively in different areas of provision. As they move through the school, a majority of pupils understand how important it is to attempt a solution themselves when they encounter difficulties. However, overall, pupils are over-reliant on guidance from staff and ready-made sheets to complete their tasks and they do not make enough decisions about how to organise and present their work. This limits the opportunities for pupils to learn increasingly independently.

Most pupils understand the importance of making choices that affect their health, well-being and fitness. They understand the need to keep fit and eat healthily, showing an awareness of the importance of sustainability and growing and using local food and produce. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 plant and harvest vegetables in the school garden and sell the produce to the local community.

Pupils represent their peers appropriately on different councils such as the school council and the eco council. They promote a variety of activities to save energy and recycle around the school, for example when organising the sale of second-hand school uniforms for parents. They are also willing to undertake responsibilities and play a part in the life and work of the school. However, pupils do not undertake leadership roles consistently enough to contribute increasingly proactively to the wider life and work of the school.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

All members of staff have an extremely positive working relationship with pupils. They treat pupils equally and respectfully, which contributes successfully to the school's caring and inclusive ethos. They work together diligently as effective team members and provide a wide range of activities and experiences that support pupils to make progress in their learning and social skills. Staff model and use Welsh language of a high standard, which encourages pupils to communicate clearly and respond in increasingly correct language. In the youngest pupils' classes, staff provide a range of beneficial learning experiences for pupils in the indoor and outdoor areas. Pupils benefit greatly from practical and creative experiences which develop their skills successfully, for example when role-playing in '*Sied Ned*'.

Teachers work well together within the school and with staff from schools in the area to plan learning activities that are appropriate and inclusive for pupils' age and stage of development, in addition to planning learning activities to transition to the secondary school. They adapt learning activities effectively to respond to pupils' interests and learning needs. Across the school, staff provide a suitable range of activities that develop pupils' oracy and writing, numeracy and digital skills. However, teachers do not support pupils to develop their reading skills effectively enough. As a result, overall, many pupils are over-reliant on support from teachers when developing their reading skills, which limits their understanding of texts and their enjoyment of reading.

Teachers provide an interesting and purposeful curriculum that develops pupils' knowledge, understanding and experiences purposefully in valuable contexts. The principles of the curriculum develop appropriately while nurturing pupils to be ambitious and enterprising learners who are a key part of the school's vision. On the

whole, teachers deliver stimulating learning experiences and present activities through interesting and lively presentations. In the best practice, they encourage pupils to think, ask them probing questions and capture the interest of most pupils successfully.

Overall, teachers include pupils' ideas when providing activities within prepared themes. The school uses trips and visits to places of interest successfully to enrich the term's theme, inspire pupils and develop their understanding of specific areas of learning. For example, their visit to a museum in Liverpool reinforces pupils' knowledge and understanding of the era and music of the 1960s effectively. They also invite visitors to the school and gain valuable input from parents. Pupils are given appropriate opportunities to learn about other cultures and customs, for example when comparing the sacred locations and books of different religions.

Across the school, learning activities provide opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding effectively. However, provision does not support pupils to make independent choices about how they learn effectively enough. Overall, staff over-direct learning, which limits pupils' ability to make increasingly independent choices about their learning.

Staff use skilful questioning methods effectively to develop pupils' skills and understanding. They provide beneficial written feedback that encourages pupils to consider what they do well and how to improve their work. These discussions are purposeful and support pupils to develop their skills successfully. However, teachers' feedback is not consistent enough across the school and information is not always presented in a timely enough manner to support pupils to refine and improve the content and quality of their work independently enough.

### **Care, support and guidance**

The school is a caring, inclusive and happy community that promotes good behaviour and the notable courtesy of nearly all pupils. All staff are committed to ensuring that pupils' values, along with their emotional well-being, are key to their learning. By using various techniques by staff, pupils are given purposeful opportunities to express their concerns and their willingness to learn during morning discussions. Staff nurture and develop pupils' moral and spiritual understanding effectively by holding beneficial assemblies and activities.

Arrangements for tracking and monitoring the progress of individual pupils and groups are appropriate. Staff identify pupils' needs at an early stage and provide them with effective support through support programmes. These programmes have a positive effect on pupils' well-being and literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils value this as they gain confidence to participate fully in learning activities.

Under the purposeful guidance of the ALN co-ordinator, assistants support pupils skilfully. Staff identify pupils' specific needs at an early stage and provide them with valuable support. They use a good range of programmes and support methods to improve their well-being and develop their basic skills. During well-being sessions, staff provide pupils with opportunities to discuss their strengths to boost their confidence and respond to any concerns they may have. Staff work closely with pupils and their families and liaise well with specialist external agencies, where

appropriate, to support them. By monitoring and evaluating provision appropriately, most pupils with ALN make good progress against their targets.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Staff work effectively with experts to ensure that pupils have a sound understanding of issues relating to forming safe relationships and a healthy lifestyle. A combination of learning activities and sessions from key partners, such as the police and the school nurse, support aspects of safeguarding and well-being and emphasise the importance of pupils' regular attendance at school.

The school provides beneficial opportunities to teach pupils about their '*cynefin*', or local area, and the wider world. Staff help pupils to appreciate issues relating to diversity and inclusion, values and equality. This includes providing them with appropriate opportunities to develop their understanding of the importance of being conscientious and principled citizens. Staff present and reinforce positive spiritual, moral and social values to pupils regularly in learning activities and collective reflection sessions. This ensures that moral aspects and equality permeate all aspects of the school's life and work effectively. This reinforces the inclusive culture that exists within its community well.

The school has a good range of opportunities that help pupils to recognise their Welsh heritage. For example, the oldest pupils enjoy learning about the history of Hedd Wyn and about the culture and influential legacy of the quarries in their local area. Through this, pupils are proud of their locality and value the local and national history and traditions of Wales.

There are suitable opportunities for pupils to influence decisions appropriately by taking part in the eco committee and the school council. These arrangements ensure that all pupils in turn are given an opportunity to express an opinion and offer suggestions on how to improve aspects of the school. They discuss a relevant range of issues and contribute appropriately to activities such as fundraising for different charities. However, staff do not always provide regular and direct enough opportunities to support pupils to lead and act proactively on their ideas to influence the wider life and work of the school.

The school develops the creative skills of most pupils successfully. For example, a local artist has visited the school to teach the youngest pupils how to weave and bend willow. As a result, pupils have created attractive pictures that reflect the unique colours and nature of their local area. Creative activities engage pupils with the valuable artistic wealth that is an integral part of their history and culture.

The school provides a variety of opportunities for pupils to take part in performances and events. For example, they are given beneficial opportunities to compete in sports competitions, perform in Christmas concerts and compete in local eisteddfodau. Through this, pupils gain self-confidence beneficially and develop their creative skills effectively.

The headteacher monitors pupils' attendance and punctuality regularly, working closely with parents and external agencies, where necessary. The school has an appropriate culture and attitudes towards pupils' safety and well-being and the



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

## **Leadership and management**

The acting headteacher provides the school with supportive and firm leadership. He undertakes his role calmly and succeeds in reinforcing and strengthening the school's principles effectively. He has a clear vision to create an inclusive school where pupils are at the heart of all of its work. He leads by example and treats his staff with care and respect. This maintains a strong sense of pride and trust between pupils and staff that permeates the school's close-knit community naturally.

Leaders set high expectations and make effective use of staff expertise. They work together effectively to maintain an ethos of productive teamwork among teachers and assistants who support pupils' well-being and achievement successfully. Through regular staff discussions, they have a relevant understanding of the school's main priorities.

Leaders plan purposefully to improve aspects such as developing pupils' speaking skills. They focus firmly on progress and raising pupils' standards, by delivering activities that enrich their learning experiences. They are also extremely considerate of the importance of maintaining the well-being of pupils and staff.

Leaders have relevant knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement within their areas of responsibility. By undertaking suitable monitoring and evaluation activities within a comprehensive timetable, they have an appropriate understanding of the effect of provision on pupils' progress. However, leaders do not always focus incisively and strategically enough on the areas for improvement. As a result, leaders do not prioritise and act on the main areas for improvement in a specific and timely enough manner.

Members of the governing body support the acting headteacher and staff successfully. Governors know the school well and ensure that they provide staff with a sensible balance of support and challenge. Through regular visits and discussions to evaluate standards and provision, they have a suitable understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This enables them to contribute to discussions in an informed manner and undertake their roles thoroughly. They link expenditure with the priorities in the development plan appropriately and make beneficial use of funding and grants to enrich provision for the school's pupils. For example, the pupil development grant is used appropriately to employ staff who promote learning and reduce the impact of poverty on pupils' educational attainment. The governing body ensures that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders have a close and productive relationship with parents and ensure that they have effective communication processes with them to enable them to raise any issues that may affect their children's well-being and learning. The school communicates with parents regularly to celebrate successes and share messages about pupils' key information on different platforms.

The school has appropriate methods to ensure that performance management arrangements support the school's improvement priorities. In discussion with their line managers, staff set purposeful objectives to promote improvement. The school provides a suitable range of purposeful opportunities that support staff to develop professionally. This includes opportunities for them to attend training to develop areas of learning and experiences and to have opportunities to work with other schools.

Leaders pay beneficial attention to national priorities. For example, they plan sensibly to respond to the principles of Curriculum for Wales, offering pupils local, contemporary and exciting experiences. This allows pupils to celebrate their identity and Welshness successfully.

## 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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