



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

A report on

Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Allta

**Central Street
Ystrad Mynach
Hengoed
CF82 7XQ**

Date of inspection: April 2024

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Allta

Name of provider	Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Allta
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	None
Number of pupils on roll	288
Pupils of statutory school age	244
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	36
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>	7.8%
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>	13.9%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	6.9%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/03/2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/05/2015
Start date of inspection	22/04/2024

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

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

Overview

Nearly all pupils are extremely proud of their school and that they belong to the Bro Allta family. They feel happy and safe within a highly inclusive, homely and caring environment. Nearly all pupils behave excellently at school and make sound progress from their starting points in all aspects of their work. They are extremely polite and respectful towards each other, staff and visitors. Their understanding of their community responsibilities is one of the main characteristics of the school. They appreciate the fact that all are given extensive opportunities to undertake leadership roles on various committees over time.

The headteacher is an effective leader who places value on providing the best education for pupils in a happy and safe environment. Staff work together successfully to create a familial and inclusive community that promotes continuous respect between pupils and adults. Four words are used to summarise what is important at the school, namely: Welshness, Kindness, Responsibility and Courtesy. Pupils are aware of these and refer to them regularly. The school has comprehensive processes to identify what it does well and what needs to be improved and it has successful procedures to make the necessary improvements.

The working relationship between staff and pupils is a strength across the school. Staff work together extremely effectively to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that encourages pupils to enjoy their learning, and develop most of their literacy, numeracy and digital skills, along with other skills, highly effectively. Although teachers have high expectations of pupils in nearly all areas, these are not always cohesive enough to support pupils to apply their extended writing skills to a consistent standard in a few of them. Staff promote the use of the Welsh language purposefully through a range of formal and informal activities and pupils respond positively to this.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that all teachers have high and shared expectations to support pupils to apply their extended writing skills to a consistent standard

What happens next

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

Main findings

Learning

On entry to the school, the social skills of a majority of pupils correspond to what is expected for their age. Only a few are able to speak Welsh on entry. However, most pupils, including those from low-income households, make sound progress from their starting points in all aspects of their learning. Nearly all pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make good progress against their targets.

Nearly all pupils' listening skills develop very well and most make sound progress in their oral skills in both languages. In the youngest pupils' classes, for example, many develop language patterns of a high standard at a very early stage by discussing issues such as their feelings or the weather and talking to each other informally in the class café. By the time they reach the top of the school, most pupils speak eloquently and confidently and are proud to use the Welsh language.

Most pupils' reading skills develop soundly. They read meaningfully and with increasing fluency and explain the context of text clearly. They discuss their favourite authors and give valid reasons for their choice. Given their age and stage of development, where appropriate, most pupils' writing skills develop securely in both languages. They write for a purpose by using a range of styles. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils write pieces to recall their visit to a Hindu temple. The oldest pupils write newspaper articles based on the story of Anne Frank, selecting adjectives carefully while showing empathy and a sensitive understanding of the context. However, a minority of pupils at the top of the school do not always complete extended written pieces to the same standard across the areas of learning.

Most pupils develop and use their understanding of mathematical concepts with increasing confidence. For example, those in the youngest pupils' classes come to count correctly and understand that a number conveys specific information. In Years 1 and 2, they place numbers in order to begin to understand place value. They match coins to their value and use them to buy objects. At the top of the school, nearly all pupils use their understanding of the four rules and their knowledge of number to compare data in various contexts, such as the temperature in Wales with the temperature in South Africa.

Nearly all pupils make consistently robust progress in developing their digital skills in various contexts across the curriculum. For example, the youngest pupils use an electronic program to present data on plastic waste in the form of a bar graph. Many also work together successfully to produce digital presentations. For example, Year 4 pupils use a green screen to create a video to share interesting facts about the local area with their peers. At the top of the school, most create and analyse spreadsheets to present and compare the prices of goods during the Second World War with today's prices. Many acquire effective coding skills, for example by programming a rover to visit countries that suffer from flooding on a map of the world.

Pupils apply their literacy, numeracy and wider skills meaningfully, appropriately and purposefully in a variety of contexts. For example, on Children in Need day, Year 2 pupils made biscuits to raise money for the charity. They read instructions, analysed

the steps and explained them verbally to the rest of the class, before weighing the ingredients and calculating the cost of producing a certain number of biscuits. Then, they made presentations of their work to share with their parents in a class assembly. In a different context, Year 4 pupils conducted an experiment to discover whether the size of a jar affects the time it takes for a candle that has been lit and placed in it to go out. Pupils planned the experiment carefully, writing the steps in order. They then calculated the volume of different jars and the time it took for the candles to go out, before recording the work and creating a digital graph to display the results, discussing verbally what they had found.

Nearly all pupils develop extremely effective creative skills. Over time, nearly all pupils play an instrument of some kind, such as the recorder or the ukulele. This develops their understanding of rhythm and tempo and broadens their awareness of elements of performing music. Nearly all are creative and show a growing understanding of the style of artists from Wales and beyond.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils feel happy and safe within the school's extremely homely and caring environment. They know whom to approach if they have any concerns and understand that there will always be someone there to listen to them and comfort them. They are confident that the staff respect them and that they will always consider their views when making decision that affect them.

Nearly all pupils are extremely proud of their school and that they belong to the Bro Allta family. Most talk enthusiastically about their learning. They state that they enjoy being at school because the staff look after them well and they have valuable learning experiences and extra-curricular opportunities. They enjoy taking part in the wide range of clubs, competitions and trips that are organised for them. This contributes directly to the high attendance rates, which continue to rise steadily. These rates are currently significantly higher than the average attendance rates of primary schools in the local authority and in Wales.

Nearly all pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are extremely polite and respectful and greet staff, visitors and their peers affectionately and enthusiastically. Most respond eagerly and conscientiously to their activities in the classroom, in central learning areas and outdoors.

Pupils develop a sound awareness of the importance of taking care of their physical health and understand the beneficial effect of taking part in physical activities and keeping fit. Many attend the wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities that are provided for them. They take part in sports competitions regularly, such as football and cross country running. They understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily and appreciate that there is a specific link between physical health and mental and emotional well-being.

Most pupils' understanding of their rights as children is developing soundly. They are aware that they have the right to be safe everywhere, including online. The significant contribution of the digital leaders in preparing presentations and activities that raise pupils' awareness of how to keep themselves safe online, reinforces this effectively.

Most pupils develop robustly as ethical and informed citizens who understand and appreciate that people in local communities and further afield can live lives that are different from their own. Members of the well-being committee volunteer at the local foodbank on a weekly basis, packing bags and talking to the area's older residents. This contributes significantly towards fostering their understanding of the importance of making effective contributions within their local community, in addition to the school community.

Pupils value the inclusive way in which the school ensures that everyone, including those who need additional support to learn, who are vulnerable or are new to the school are given extensive opportunities to undertake leadership roles on various committees over time. Pupils' understanding of their community responsibilities is one of the main features of the school. They work together productively to achieve the objectives of the committees and create detailed action plans and evaluations of their activity to ensure that they operate in the best possible way.

Most pupils are ambitious, confident, capable and independent learners. They concentrate well for extended periods during learning sessions and persevere and show resilience when faced with challenging situations or information that is new to them. For example, without specific guidance from an adult, pupils at the top of the school use a variety of media in both languages to search for specific information about extreme weather before writing a Welsh-medium podcast on the subject.

Nearly all pupils contribute purposefully during learning sessions by suggesting their own ideas and working successfully with their peers in pair or group activities. Across the school, most listen maturely and reflect, respect, question, challenge and support each other's ideas and contributions regularly. Most take increasing responsibility for their learning, responding positively to advice about how to improve their work.

Teaching and learning experiences

Teachers work together extremely effectively to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that motivates children to enjoy their learning. The curriculum builds systematically and coherently on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills to ensure progression as they move through the school. Teachers work successfully and skilfully with pupils, parents and governors to implement the principles of Curriculum for Wales. The school is innovative in considering the local context when planning activities. For example, Year 5 pupils consider the effect of the miners' strike on the lives of the residents of Ystrad Mynach in the 1980s.

Teachers enrich the curriculum continuously, taking advantage of the valuable contributions of members of the community. For example, a guest speaker from the community presents traditional artefacts and food from his childhood in South Africa to pupils at the top of the school. This allows them to compare their identity with the natives of South Africa. Teachers plan interesting visits for pupils that are relevant to their themes. For example, Year 2 pupils learn about the features of moat and bailey castles in Wales following a visit to Cardiff Castle. Teachers organise residential trips for pupils regularly to enrich the curriculum and to raise their confidence and awareness of their heritage. For example, pupils from different classes visit the Urdd residential centres in different parts of Wales every year.

The relationship between staff and pupils is a strength across the school. Members of the teaching team, namely the teachers and assistants, and support staff such as the secretary and the caretaker, are warm, caring and supportive of all pupils. Members of the teaching team ensure that most activities meet pupils' needs and give full consideration to the learning needs of individuals when planning the curriculum. Where necessary, learning assistants provide effective support for specific individuals and groups, which enables them to make sound progress in line with their targets. The classrooms are stimulating and engaging environments that are attractive, celebrate pupils' successes well and support them effectively with their learning.

Pupils are given a range of interesting opportunities to develop their various skills appropriately across the curriculum. For example, teachers plan purposeful opportunities for pupils in the reception class to develop their oral skills as they discuss the best material to use to make an umbrella for Sali Mali. Most teachers plan regular and appropriate opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills. For example, Year 2 pupils write a job description for a member of staff, using a variety of interesting openings and adjectives. Teachers provide interesting opportunities for pupils to write for a range of different purposes, but their expectations are not always high enough to ensure that they apply their extended writing skills to the same consistent standard in a few tasks. The school's provision for developing pupils' numeracy and digital skills is sound. For example, Year 5 pupils present data digitally in the form of a table and a bar graph, analysing the length of the paper chains of various groups within the class.

Staff use the classrooms and outdoor areas effectively to stimulate learning and promote pupils' skills further. For example, they hold a picnic with pupils from Year 1 and their Teddy and encourage them to discuss their favourite foods. Teachers also take advantage of facilities outside the school grounds very effectively to enrich learning. For example, they provide Year 3 pupils with opportunities to conduct an enquiry in a nearby woodland when considering the impact of climate change on the local area's native trees and shrubs.

Many teachers and assistants question pupils sensibly during presentations and share constructive feedback that praises their strengths and identifies what they need to do to improve. Across the school, pupils respond to feedback increasingly effectively and improve elements of their work as a result, for example by adding conjunctions to their instructions to enrich their work. Pupils at the top of the school evaluate their learning sensibly during the *Gwener Gwirio* session. Teachers across the school use the *Wal Gwella* effectively to model writing that shows increasing improvement. As a result, pupils have a sound understanding of how to improve their own work.

Most teachers communicate with pupils by using Welsh of a high standard. They promote the use of the Welsh language purposefully through a range of formal and informal activities. For example, on St David's Day, pupils were given opportunities to promote the Welsh language in the community by talking to local residents on the high street, in shops and in the local library. As a result, pupils' spoken Welsh skills and influence on Welshness in the community develop successfully.

Care, support and guidance

Staff place value on ensuring that the happiness, safety and well-being of all pupils are at the heart of all of the school's work and ethos. They work together successfully to create a familial and inclusive community that promotes continuous respect between pupils and adults. Procedures for monitoring, maintaining and improving pupils' attendance and punctuality are successful and the headteacher and the teaching team prioritise the health and emotional well-being of all pupils to support them to be ready to learn. As a result, pupils are happy and the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Teachers track pupils' progress effectively. This helps them to identify their well-being needs and learning requirements. They summarise important details about all pupils thoroughly on one-page profiles, which are an accessible means of enabling members of the teaching team to identify pupils' needs and personalise provision for them.

The school's arrangements for supporting pupils, including those with ALN, are extremely effective and organised. The ALN co-ordinator (ALNCo) works successfully with the rest of the teaching team to identify the particular needs of individuals at an early stage and implement plans that are tailored for them. The varied provision meets pupils' needs well and improves their learning, social and emotional skills. The ALNCo tracks the progress of these pupils in relation to their individual targets and makes successful use of support from external agencies to ensure that they receive specialist additional support. As a result, nearly all pupils with ALN make sound progress.

Leaders and members of the teaching team provide valuable opportunities to promote and support appropriate behaviour during support sessions. For example, they use the '*Gwerthuso fy Nysgu*' ('Evaluate my Learning') booklet effectively to record the next learning steps that pupils and staff have agreed on, which relate to their attitudes to learning and their commitment to behave well.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development successfully. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect on values such as friendship, happiness and respecting diversity. Specific activities and days, such as express yourself day, anti-bullying week and online safety week support pupils to make good choices and reflect on current affairs. Members of the teaching team provide pupils with a wide range of experiences and opportunities to learn about different religions and these succeed in engaging their interest and curiosity well. Studying the customs of Christmas, Diwali and Shabbat develops pupils' understanding of the customs of different religions very effectively.

The school promotes and develops pupils' understanding of their identity, heritage and culture highly effectively. Pupils always take advantage of opportunities to celebrate their Welshness and celebrate the history and traditions of Wales through events and activities such as Eisteddfodau, visits and their regular use of the local area.

The school has consistent arrangements to ensure that pupils learn about the importance of eating and drinking healthily and taking part in physical education activities. To improve their fitness and encourage them to live healthily, a wide range of valuable opportunities are provided for pupils to take part in practical and competitive activities, such as Urdd competitions. A useful range of opportunities are also provided for pupils to take part in performances to raise their confidence and develop their creative skills further. Pupils' participation in activities such as Ffiliffest, for example, not only builds their confidence but also develops their ability to work with others and perform in front of an audience.

The school supports groups of pupils including, for example, those with ALN, to make whole-school decisions within their committees and councils. For example, the school council has contributed to the task of revising the school uniform policy so that it is more inclusive and the eco committee has organised recycling days for plastic pens, clothes and books. For example, they have visited a local recycling centre to understand exactly how the local authority recycles various materials. These experiences have a positive effect on their understanding of recycling and their responsibility as principled citizens.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is an energetic, organised and effective leader and has a clear vision for the school, which she shares successfully with pupils, staff and parents. This vision is at the heart of all of the school's activities and is based on working together to provide the best education for pupils, nurturing love and respect for the rich languages and culture of Wales and for those of other countries. The school's main aim is to nurture well-rounded, kind and responsible individuals who will, in due course, become valuable members of their local community and the society of the wider world. Four words are used to encapsulate its expectations, which are: Welshness, Kindness, Responsibility and Courtesy, and pupils are aware of these and refer to them regularly.

The school maintains a continuous culture of improvement effectively. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and other leaders, teachers and assistants work together extremely effectively as a team to lead teaching successfully. Together, they ensure that the learning experiences they provide for all pupils are appropriate, of a high standard, exciting, interesting and rich.

Leaders have high expectations of themselves, teaching, assistants and pupils. They demonstrate good values and professional behaviour of a high standard which contribute positively to ensuring that the school is a homely haven for pupils and staff. They foster a strong culture of safeguarding and monitor pupils' progress and well-being effectively. Leaders manage the performance of teachers and assistants continuously to praise their professional successes and encourage them to improve any specific areas that it is agreed that they are in need of improvement for the benefit of pupils.

The school has detailed and effective self-evaluation procedures and all members of the leadership team contribute to them directly. Pupils, parents and governors also contribute to them regularly. These procedures are based on a range of sources of first-hand evidence and provide an extremely detailed and accurate picture of the

current situation. The information derived from them influences the improvement priorities directly. The school's improvement procedures are comprehensive and have a positive effect on improving pupils' achievement, attainment and progress.

Leaders base staff's professional learning activities on national priorities, the school's improvement priorities and on their individual professional needs. They monitor the effect of these activities on provision and teaching methods regularly. They also arrange for teachers to observe each other's good practice across the school and in other schools within the local cluster. Recently, for example, they have focused on observing different methods for teaching reading.

Governors provide a sensible balance of support and challenge to leaders. They visit the school regularly to evaluate specific aspects of provision and to hold discussions with the co-ordinators of areas of learning and experience, and pupils. As a result, they have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and the few areas in need of improvement. This enables them to contribute to setting the strategic priorities in an extremely informed manner and to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Together with the headteacher, the administrative officer and local authority officers, they manage the school's finances prudently. This includes the pupil development grant, which is used appropriately to reduce the impact of poverty on pupils' educational attainment. They also ensure that the school has purposeful arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders have a productive relationship with parents. They provide regular opportunities for them to express an opinion about aspects of provision, responding to their comments in a timely manner, where appropriate. For example, they have adapted the school's methods of communicating with parents following a recent questionnaire. Leaders now send digital messages and a newsletter to parents regularly to inform them about important issues. Occasionally, leaders organise effective sessions to develop parents' ability to support their children at home, for example by encouraging them to read and use their numeracy skills and to explain the school's arrangements to teach pupils about healthy relationships.

The school has a beneficial partnership with playgroups and the local secondary school to ensure that pupils transition confidently from one sector to another. The partnership with the other primary schools in the cluster and the secondary school is very effective and provides successful opportunities for teachers to plan jointly and share successful teaching practices with each other.

By working with Cardiff Metropolitan University and other schools in the cluster, the school not only trains prospective teachers effectively but also benefits from having them as part of the teaching team. Supporting trainees also enriches the professional learning experiences and research methods of staff which, in turn, enriches pupils' experiences.

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:

Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website:

<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>

This document has been translated by Trosol (Welsh to English).