



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

A report on

**Ysgol Bro Idris
Dolgellau
Gwynedd
LL40 1HY**

Date of inspection: December 2019

by

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

About Ysgol Bro Idris

Ysgol Bro Idris is a bilingual school for 3 to 16-year old pupils, and is maintained by Gwynedd local authority. The school opened as Ysgol Bro Idris in September 2017 following the merger of Ysgol y Gader, Ysgol Gynradd Dolgellau, Ysgol Gynradd Brithdir, Ysgol Ieuan Gwynedd, Ysgol Dinas Mawddwy, Ysgol Gynradd Llanelltyd, Ysgol Friog, Ysgol y Clogau and Ysgol Ganllwyd.

There are currently 581 pupils on roll, 352 of whom are of primary school age and 229 are of secondary school age. The school serves the town of Dolgellau and villages in the wide surrounding area.

Eight point eight per cent (8.8%) of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the national average of 16.4% for secondary schools and 18% for primary schools. No pupils live in the 20% most disadvantaged areas in Wales. Very few pupils are eligible to receive support for English as an additional language or come from ethnic minority backgrounds. Over half of pupils speak Welsh fluently, but nearly all pupils understand the language. Thirteen point eight per cent (13.8%) of pupils have special educational needs, which is lower than the national average of 22.9%. Around 1.2% of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is below the national average.

The headteacher was appointed in 2016 in time for the school's opening in 2017. A deputy headteacher, three heads of phase and special educational needs co-ordinators complete the senior management team.

The school is currently working with Welsh Government and other schools to proceed with developments in relation to education reform in Wales.

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

Ysgol Bro Idris is an inclusive and welcoming community in which provision for pupils' wellbeing is at the heart of all of the school's work. As a result, most pupils behave well, are friendly and caring towards each other, and treat adults and visitors with respect and courtesy.

The headteacher has a clear vision that is based firmly on 'creating a school that ensures that every learner is happy and safe and reaches his or her full potential, both educationally and socially'. Leaders and staff work together successfully to establish innovative provision across a wide area, and to create an ethos of one school.

Between the foundation phase and the end of key stage 2, pupils develop their skills successfully. However, by the end of key stage 4, pupils do not demonstrate the literacy, numeracy or information and communication technology (ICT) skills expected for their age and ability. Provision for skills is not co-ordinated effectively enough between key stage 2 and key stage 3.

The principles of the foundation phase have been embedded firmly and, on the whole, teachers provide valuable experiences for pupils. However, the quality of teaching is not consistently high across the school.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards, particularly for secondary age pupils
- R2 Develop pupils' skills across the school through co-ordinated planning
- R3 Improve the quality of teaching, with specific attention to meeting all pupils' needs, particularly for secondary-age pupils and more able pupils
- R4 Improve leadership in order to strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning processes

What happens next

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

On entry to the reception class, many pupils show literacy and numeracy skills that are expected for their age.

In the foundation phase, many pupils make good progress and develop their skills to an appropriate level for their age. In the subsequent key stages, many make satisfactory progress and a few pupils make strong progress. Overall, many recall previous knowledge appropriately and apply it to new situations, for example by recalling the story 'Eira'r Gaeaf' and developing ideas about characters from that story.

From an early age, many pupils listen carefully to the teacher and treat their peers with respect while listening to their contributions. They acquire rich spoken language and dialect quickly. Many in the foundation phase respond to questions confidently, and a few undertake the role of leader in a discussion group successfully, for example by suggesting suitable sentences to describe characters from 'Gwlad y Rwla'. By the end of key stage 2, most speak skilfully in Welsh and English. They listen well to each other and adults, discuss with their partner and maintain a focus on their work. A good example of this is discussions between 'partneriaid parablu' (talking partners), where nearly all pupils make a valuable contribution to a discussion on their task's success criteria.

A majority of secondary-age pupils listen carefully and discuss work maturely. On the whole, many pupils respond well orally in Welsh and English, but very few pupils succeed in providing comprehensive answers. A majority use subject terminology correctly when responding to the teacher, for example when discussing metals' reactivity with water. A minority discuss their work effectively in groups and make valuable contributions. However, a few pupils are very reserved in lessons.

Most pupils develop reading skills successfully from their starting points. For example, in the foundation phase, pupils read and interpret text to create a picture of Rala Rwdins. Many of these pupils read from a book that is suitable for their ability with increasing accuracy by using an appropriate variety of relevant strategies. At the top of key stage 2, many pupils read accurately in Welsh and English. They read aloud with fluency and correct expression, and pay attention to punctuation. They succeed in discussing different authors skilfully, by expressing an opinion and reasoning their answers. Many secondary-age pupils use skimming and scanning skills successfully to find information. Many develop appropriate reading skills, for example by identifying techniques and style features in text. They read instructions confidently and succeed in continuing with their work without additional support from the teacher. However, overall, pupils' higher-order reading skills have not developed adequately to interpret and find implied meanings in texts effectively.

Many pupils' writing skills develop well from an early age, including their extended writing skills. Foundation phase pupils make good use of adjectives, and many write for different purposes and are beginning to consider the reader. A few of these pupils have a strong understanding of the rules of punctuation. For example, they write fluently in coherent sentences, and use a good range of adjectives when writing Christmas cards.

In key stage 2, many pupils' writing skills are developing soundly in Welsh and English. They write factually successfully in different contexts, for example when producing an information pamphlet about France. The handwriting of a few primary-age pupils is untidy, and they do not take enough care when presenting their work. By the end of the key stage, many pupils write at length appropriately and structure their work suitably. They succeed in expressing an opinion by using and showing a good understanding of different styles, such as using persuasive language and rhetorical questions.

In key stages 3 and 4, many pupils show a good standard of punctuation and paragraphing. They use key subject terminology confidently. A majority write at length appropriately and succeed in structuring their work suitably by giving consideration to the audience, for example when writing an online blog about the effects of bullying. Overall, they have a good grasp of syntax in Welsh, and use suitable vocabulary when making comparisons and simple interpretations. A few pupils show a sound understanding of effective techniques to create mood and atmosphere in a ghost story in their English lessons. Overall, secondary-age pupils do not have an extensive enough vocabulary or a sound enough grasp of idioms to raise the level of their work to a higher standard.

In the foundation phase, most pupils' numeracy skills are developing soundly. They measure, order numbers and follow patterns confidently. Many use their numeracy skills to interpret data successfully, for example when creating and labelling a bar graph and responding to questions that derive from that graph. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils use their skills in more complex activities, for example by creating line graphs, calculating calories in food and using a scale on a map. A majority of secondary-age pupils apply their numeracy skills appropriately across a few subjects. For example, in humanities lessons, they interpret co-ordinates for longitude and latitude, and in science they gather data from an experiment, produce a pie chart and interpret it correctly. Overall, they have the necessary skills to solve simple arithmetical problems, such as calculating speed and currency exchange rates.

Primary-age pupils develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills well. In the foundation phase, many use ICT purposefully to combine a picture, text and change the size and colour of the font. They develop their thinking and problem-solving skills well by steering a programmable toy purposefully. In key stage 2, most pupils use their ICT skills confidently to support their learning across the curricular areas. Many develop their creative skills successfully to create an attractive web page. Pupils also use green screen technology skilfully to emulate commentary on a rugby match. By the end of the key stage, many use a word processor well to produce letters, and use tools within the program to check language and translate purposefully.

Secondary-age pupils use their ICT skills appropriately in a few subjects across the curriculum. A majority use and apply programs successfully to create presentations, documents and course work, for example to produce written work by e-mail in English and submit their work for the skills challenge certificate. However, secondary age pupils' ICT skills do not build adequately on what was developed in key stage 2.

Across the school, pupils develop their thinking skills satisfactorily when given an opportunity to do so. For example, in key stage 2, many pupils use a variety of mathematical strategies and rules successfully to respond to the 'Number of the day' task. A majority of pupils demonstrate appropriate creative skills in lessons, for example when emulating the work of Welsh artists and experiencing success in art and craft competitions in local and national Eisteddfodau.

Since the school was established, overall, performance at the end of key stage 4 has not compared well with similar schools. In 2019, outcomes are lower than expected across the indicators, and performance in the skills challenge certificate is lower than that of similar schools. Most pupils follow the Welsh first language course until the end of key stage 4. Over half succeed in gaining a level 2 qualification.

At the end of their time at the school, most pupils begin in further education, training or employment.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are friendly and caring towards each other, and treat adults and visitors with respect and courtesy. The school's oldest pupils take advantage of valuable opportunities to mentor younger pupils. For example, they visit key stage 2 classes to contribute to personal education sessions, and deliver activities that they have planned themselves.

Most pupils are ready to learn at the beginning of lessons, and move between lessons and activities in an orderly manner. Many apply themselves to tasks quickly, persevere diligently and show a positive attitude to learning. They concentrate successfully in lessons and there are strong examples of pupils doing so for extended periods. In the best practice, they show resilience when facing challenges in their work and take pride in the principle of 'keeping going'. A specific example of this is pupils in the reception class persevering tirelessly when peeling potatoes and carrots to make soup for Rala Rwdins.

Across the sites, many pupils work purposefully with a partner and in groups, for example when evaluating each other's work. In the foundation phase, pupils concentrate and stay on task well, for example when recounting a story. Across the primary sites, pupils' ability to work independently in the different learning areas is a strength. In key stage 2, many have a healthy attitude towards learning, and work beneficially and productively in pairs, for example to prepare a presentation on the merits of exercise. In key stages 3 and 4, many work well together, for example in their French lessons when describing the physical features of a monster to each other.

Pupils who are part of various councils undertake their leadership roles with pride. When given an opportunity to do so, pupils have a positive effect on the school's life and work. For example, they have had a beneficial influence on aspects of the school's behaviour policy. Pupils have also identified that the use of water bottles in the canteen is harmful to the environment, and have changed the system to provide cups and jugs instead. However, the work of these councils has not had a sufficient influence on fundamental areas, such as teaching.

Most pupils understand the importance of keeping fit. They talk knowledgeably about the need to eat healthily and drink enough water. Many take part in valuable activities that contribute to their fitness. They take advantage of opportunities to attend an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities, such as rugby, netball and football. Most pupils feel safe at school and know how to stay safe online.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Most teachers know their pupils well and foster a beneficial working relationship with them. They have good subject knowledge. They explain and direct clearly when introducing aims and objectives by setting purposeful success criteria for tasks.

Many teachers plan experiences that engage interest and stimulate learning. For example, in key stage 4, lessons include valuable discussions on contemporary themes, such as social anxiety. Many teachers use suitable resources to support teaching and create a stimulating environment where pupils are able to learn productively. They provide pupils with beneficial support and encouragement as they work. This is a prominent strength in the foundation phase, where teachers use songs, such as 'Dal Ati', which stimulate pupils to persevere during activities.

A majority of teachers have high expectations in terms of pupil participation. They plan beneficial tasks and activities, including those that support the learning of less able pupils to ensure progress in their subject knowledge. However, in a minority of cases, teachers do not ensure sufficient challenge in order to stretch pupils, particularly those who are more able. In these cases, they also set too many short tasks. As a result, pupils are not given enough opportunities to reflect on their work and develop a wider range of skills, such as higher-order reading skills or writing in various contexts. Many teachers walk around the classroom and provide pupils with beneficial help and support. They use questioning effectively to check understanding and ensure good participation. A minority of teachers use questioning effectively to ensure that pupils think more deeply and develop robust problem-solving skills.

Many teachers provide beneficial comments on pupils' work with valuable advice on how to improve their work. On the whole, teachers ensure appropriately that pupils respond to comments.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets most pupils' requirements. In key stage 4, there is an appropriate range of academic and occupational qualifications. Through a partnership with the local further education college, the school succeeds in broadening the choice of courses, which allows pupils to study subjects such as health and care, engineering and computer science. The school adapts the curriculum appropriately in order to respond to the needs of individuals and groups of pupils with special educational needs or those who need to develop social skills.

The principles of the foundation phase have been embedded firmly, and the school provides a good balance of valuable experiences for these pupils. The curriculum builds successfully from the foundation phase to key stage 2, and is structured appropriately to correspond to the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. A few subjects in key stage 3 have also planned suitable learning experiences jointly. For example, pupils in Year 7 and 8 study the religion, history and geography of Japan in their humanities lessons, and therefore link learning more effectively to ensure a full understanding of the theme.

Year 6 pupils are given valuable opportunities to attend the main site on a weekly basis for science, French, physical education, and design and technology lessons from subject teachers. Art and music teachers also provide lessons at the primary sites. Leaders do not evaluate and review the curriculum in key stages 3 and 4 regularly enough to satisfy pupils' wishes, particularly those who are more able.

The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about Welsh culture and heritage, and local history, in a majority of areas of learning. For example, pupils' study local legends about the Gwylliaid and learn about the life of Owain Glyndŵr in key stage 2. The school makes valuable use of local writers, such as Mair Tomos Ifans and Bethan Gwanas, who hold frequent workshops to talk about their life and work.

An appropriate range of extra-curricular activities enrich pupils' learning experiences suitably. For example, the school organises a valuable cultural trip to Brittany to promote pupils' understanding of the Celtic link with Wales.

In the early years and the beginning of key stage 2, valuable experiences are planned in which skills are woven carefully into provision. However, arrangements to ensure that pupils make increasing development in their skills in the other key stages are not robust enough. Too often, across the school, expectations are not high enough to ensure that more able pupils make the expected progress. On the whole, the school provides appropriate support for pupils with weak literacy and numeracy skills through the work of learning coaches and other support staff.

There are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills in the foundation phase and key stage 2. However, provision to develop ICT skills in key stage 3 and 4 is limited.

The school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh skills. At the end of key stage 4, most pupils sit the GCSE examination in Welsh first language. There are beneficial arrangements for pupils on the primary sites to develop Welsh socialising skills through the weekly 'Clybiau Cymraeg Ysgol Bro Idris' (CYBI) Welsh language clubs. The Welsh council also promotes the advantages of bilingualism effectively, for example by creating a short film about how the Welsh language supports the business world in the town of Dolgellau.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

The school is an inclusive and welcoming community in which provision for pupils' wellbeing is at the heart of its work. However, leaders and teachers do not use the information that is available robustly enough to meet all pupils' needs. Opportunities for pupils to voice their opinions about important aspects of the school's work are also limited.

Highly effective use is made of the 'Hafan', which is a centre that provides valuable support for secondary-age pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. Staff at the 'Hafan' have a good awareness of pupils' needs, and provide purposeful care and support for pupils across the school. This is a strong feature of the school's work, which has a positive effect on pupils' confidence, behaviour and attitudes to learning. The school has a successful partnership with a number of agencies that

provide specialist support to individuals in line with their needs, in addition to providing staff with valuable training. This contributes successfully towards creating the caring and inclusive ethos within the school.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is suitable. Teachers and leaders use monitoring processes and track their progress appropriately in order to plan the next steps and provide suitable interventions. Special educational needs co-ordinators monitor the progress of pupils who receive interventions regularly. However, teachers do not use this information productively enough to adapt provision for individuals. Suitable individual development plans are produced in consultation with parents, pupils and staff. However, teachers do not consider their content carefully enough when planning lessons. As a result, teaching does not always meet the pupil's need in full.

The school has strengthened pupil-tracking procedures recently in order to ensure consistency across the school. This has led to an ethos of more open co-operation and more strategic action for improvement. The process of setting more realistic and challenging targets, particularly at the end of key stage 4, is developing suitably.

The school ensures that parents receive relevant information about the school's work. Evenings for nursery pupils' parents at the beginning of their education at the school are an effective means of sharing information and ensure a smooth transition. Valuable information is also shared with parents, for example through the school handbook and in option evenings at the end of Year 9. Parents receive purposeful reports on their child's progress regularly, which provide a clear picture of their attainment.

Teachers plan and provide a valuable personal and social education programme that develops pupils' moral, social and cultural attitudes successfully. A number of external speakers make a beneficial contribution to pupils' understanding of a wide range of social issues, for example a talk on racism and equality by the Jamaican poet, Yasus Afari. The school develops spiritual and ethical values suitably, for example through opportunities for pupils to reflect on modern day themes, and morning assemblies under the guidance of a local minister.

The school has robust arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily. Physical health is promoted regularly through a beneficial range of extra-curricular activities, for example rugby, gymnastics, netball and dance. A high number of pupils attend these activities, which has a positive effect on their health. There are suitable opportunities for pupils in the foundation phase and key stage 2 to express their views in relation to their learning, by providing input into the class themes. Although there are suitable opportunities for pupils to contribute to school life through various council, opportunities for them to influence fundamental aspects, such as teaching, are limited. The school prepares pupils well for the next step in their education or the world of work. For example, there are beneficial opportunities for Year 10 pupils to share their experiences with Year 9 pupils about their options. Guest speakers are used successfully to discuss local careers, for example in forestry.

The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to take part in a range of activities to contribute beneficially towards supporting local and national charities. They have collected significant amounts of money for charities such as the local food bank, Mind and Macmillan.

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

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher has established and conveyed a clear vision for Ysgol Bro Idris. This vision is based firmly on 'creating a school that ensures that every learner is happy and safe and reaches his or her full potential, both educationally and socially'. She is energetic and enthusiastic, and has established a strong sense of one team across the school. However, although leaders have ensured good standards in terms of pupils' achievement in the foundation phase and key stage 2, they have not had a positive effect on outcomes by the end of key stage 4.

The senior management team, which includes the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and heads of phase, work together effectively in order to establish innovative provision across a wide area and create an ethos of one school. They have established an appropriate management structure for the school's strategic duties, which ensures clear and consistent guidance across all sites. The senior management team has clear responsibilities that are distributed sensibly and, on the whole, lines of accountability are clear.

The heads of site and heads of areas of learning and experience have a thorough understanding of their roles. However, responsibilities for leading cross-school areas have not been defined clearly enough. Therefore, leaders do not always act cohesively enough to ensure improvements in provision.

Through their conscientious work with the shadow governing board and the current governing body, governors have supported the school successfully through the challenging process of establishing the new school. They share a vision to develop a successful all-through school that serves a wide area. They work closely with leaders, for example when scrutinising pupils' work, in order to ensure that they have up-to-date knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They challenge underperformance appropriately, where necessary.

The school has established a calendar of suitable procedures to self-evaluate important aspects of its work. These include useful elements, such as scrutinising books, analysing performance data and pupils' progress, lesson observations, and meetings to monitor standards. As a result, the school has an accurate overview of its strengths and areas that need to be developed further. Recently, leaders have been using this information to plan purposefully to improve standards. For example, co-operation to ensure consistency in planning methods has had a positive influence on provision across the foundation phase classes. Sharing planning responsibilities between teachers in key stage 2 has contributed positively towards consistency in pupils' learning experiences.

Overall, the improvement plan is comprehensive and summarises how leaders and staff will address the school's development needs. Work is scheduled appropriately and outlines clear responsibilities and monitoring. Suitable criteria are identified and there is a clear process for evaluating progress. However, self-evaluation and improvement planning procedures do not focus in enough detail on developing practical elements of teaching, such as setting a suitable level of challenge, particularly in key stage 3 and 4.

The school has established a culture and ethos of supporting the professional development of all staff suitably. A series of appropriate activities is held to increase their knowledge, understanding and skills. Regular opportunities for teachers to come together to share good practice promote development at all levels appropriately. For example, there are beneficial opportunities for teachers to visit their peers who work with different ages in order to ensure consistency in provision. This strengthens the sense of team spirit among most staff.

The school develops middle leaders' skills through a valuable mentoring system, which is provided in co-operation with a local authority officer. Performance management arrangements are appropriate. Personal targets focus suitably on the school's strategic priorities, as well as individuals' development needs.

The school has forged beneficial links with other schools, both locally and further afield, in order to share good practice. For example, it works with the Wales All-age Schools Forum on elements of provision.

All of the school's sites have a suitable supply of resources. The headteacher, business manager and governors work together successfully in order to ensure that the school's budget is used appropriately. They forward plan suitably in order to spend the surplus beneficially and allocate funding to maintain staffing in the medium term. The school's staffing levels are appropriate to fulfil the needs of the curriculum, including teachers and learning assistants. Human resources are used effectively and flexibly across the sites, for example by deploying teachers and assistants at more than one site during the week. The school uses grants effectively, including the pupil development grant, in order to support the development of pupils' skills and wellbeing.

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 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 and middle leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read 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 classes, 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, where appropriate
- 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' wellbeing, 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 (www.estyn.gov.wales)

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

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

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

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

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