



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

A report on

Ysgol Rhiw Bechan

**Tregynon
Powys
SY16 3EH**

Date of inspection: January 2024

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Rhiw Bechan

Name of provider	Ysgol Rhiw Bechan
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh and English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	169
Pupils of statutory school age	122
Number in nursery classes	21
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 23.7%)	8.5%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 13.2%)	37.7%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	6.6%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/05/2016
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/09/2015
Start date of inspection	22/01/2024

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

Ysgol Rhiw Bechan is a happy and caring school. The headteacher leads with enthusiasm and compassion and knows the pupils, staff, and families well. There is a strong team ethos within the school ensuring that pupils across both language streams have similar learning experiences. Staff, pupils and parents cooperate successfully to create an ethos of one inclusive school.

Staff have effective working relationship with pupils which nurtures their well-being successfully. This fosters a supportive environment which contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Pupils are friendly, polite, and happy in school and contribute fully to school life. Teachers work diligently to ensure that topics are engaging and relevant to the pupils. However, at times, teachers across the school over-direct the learning, which inhibits the pupils' ability to develop their skills independently.

Throughout the school, staff create a welcoming learning environment. Leaders have high aspirations and collaborate and communicate effectively with partners to enhance pupils' learning experiences. As a result, many pupils make good progress in developing their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. However, opportunities to develop and apply pupils' skills in the outdoor area are limited.

The headteacher provides strong leadership. The school's current priorities for improvement are appropriate and leaders work purposefully, alongside the governing body, to secure improvements for the school. Together, they understand most of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, leaders do not distribute all roles and whole school responsibilities robustly enough across the senior leadership team. As a result, not all areas for development are identified or actioned upon effectively enough following monitoring processes.

Recommendations

- R1 Sharpen self-evaluation processes and planning for improvement
- R2 Refine provision to enable pupils to become more independent in their learning
- R3 Improve opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their skills in the outdoor area

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at school, many pupils in both the Welsh-medium and English-medium streams, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible for free school meals, make steady progress from their starting points. Many are developing their skills to communicate increasingly confidently in Welsh and English and develop sound numeracy and digital skills.

Most of the youngest pupils develop their listening skills well. They enjoy hearing familiar stories and rhymes, and they answer teachers' questions confidently. Across the school, most pupils respond well to each other and to adults. They listen attentively during classroom discussions and make appropriate suggestions during group tasks. As they move through the school, most older pupils listen purposefully, respecting other their peers ideas and building upon their suggestions and opinions.

In the English-medium stream, most pupils make good progress in developing their English oracy skills. Younger pupils describe their activities with enthusiasm. They express their likes and dislikes clearly. Many older pupils explain their work accurately and in fine detail, for example when describing their reasoning for making decisions when controlling a robotic device. A majority of the youngest pupils in the Welsh-medium stream develop a grasp of the Welsh language appropriately. For example, they re-tell a story confidently through following a set structure. As pupils move through the school, many strive to speak Welsh in classroom situations but are less inclined and confident to use the language in less formal situations.

Many younger pupils in the English-medium stream make appropriate progress in developing their Welsh language skills. They enjoy sharing basic information about themselves and discuss their local area and weather with increasing confidence. As pupils progress through the school, the progress of their Welsh speaking skills varies, and a minority of pupils' Welsh vocabulary and sentence patterns remains limited.

Across the school, most pupils develop their reading skills appropriately. Younger pupils learn letter sounds steadily and blend them accurately to read simple words. They build on these skills successfully and, by Year 2, most pupils read simple texts with fluency and accuracy. Many older pupils engage with a range of texts showing a deep level of understanding. For example, they use their knowledge of a complex story to explain a character's actions and motivations.

In both language streams, most younger pupils' early writing skills develop successfully through mark making, drawing symbols, and writing letters in a range of contexts. By Year 2, most pupils write simple sentences accurately and use capital letters and full stops correctly. Most older pupils in the Welsh-medium and English-medium streams develop their English writing skills well and display a sound grasp of familiar spelling patterns, paragraphs, and punctuation. They write maturely in a range of genres, taking into account the intended audience when considering their use of vocabulary. For example, pupils recount empathetically a day in the life of a refugee, describing his hopes and fears on his first day in a new school. Many pupils in the Welsh-medium stream develop their Welsh writing skills adequately. They

understand how to write competently, using appropriate punctuation and grammar, and are beginning to edit and improve their writing purposefully. However, they do not always use the skills they have learnt to produce extended pieces of writing well enough.

Most pupils make sound progress in their mathematical skills as they progress through the school. Many younger pupils have a sound knowledge of numbers to 20. By Year 2, most pupils use a range of resources and use standard units of measurement effectively to measure themselves and objects around the class, for example. As pupils move through the school, most develop their number skills appropriately. For example, in both language streams, they have a sound grasp of place value, multiplication and division. However, a minority of pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts, such as data, is less developed. Across the school, many pupils use their numeracy skills appropriately in other aspects of their learning.

Most pupils' digital skills develop well overall. From a young age they begin to use their digital skills constructively in a rich range of learning experiences. Many younger pupils control a programmable toy successfully and save and retrieve files of their work independently. Most pupils develop their digital skills purposefully as they move through the school. For example, older pupils create simple coding instructions and manipulate databases confidently.

Most pupils' physical skills develop soundly through a variety of stimulating experiences and activities that promote their health and well-being effectively, for example when playing team games and taking part in swimming sessions.

Younger pupils develop their creative skills adequately. As they progress through the school, many older pupils' creative skills develop well and they apply them confidently in a beneficial range of activities across the curriculum, for example when creating models of planets.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Across the school, pupils have strong working relationships with adults and with each other. This contributes notably to pupils' confidence and their positive attitude to learning. Nearly all pupils are courteous and polite to staff, visitors, and their peers, for example when holding doors open and greet with a smile. They demonstrate good behaviour in class, in the playground and around the school.

Nearly all feel happy and safe in school and know that adults will listen to any concerns they have, support them, and resolve the situation quickly and fairly. This supports most pupils to have positive relations with staff and demonstrate tolerant attitudes and mutual respect. As a result, most pupils have a strong sense of pride and belonging to the school.

Many pupils apply themselves enthusiastically to their tasks which encourages them to work collaboratively, and, on the whole, they persevere to complete their work consistently. This is evident when pupils contribute to what and how they learn. For example, when younger pupils design a bear hunt game for other pupils. However, in many lessons pupils rely too heavily on staff to direct their learning and as a result many pupils do not choose their tasks or how to record their work independently.

Many pupils, including those with ALN, and those who are eligible for free school meals take on leadership roles and responsibilities confidently. They play a full part in the life and work of the school, for example as members of the school council. In addition, members of the Sports Ambassadors contribute well towards the upkeep of equipment, organise school games and provide warm-up sessions before physical education sessions.

Most pupils communicate effectively about the importance of healthy eating and drinking. This is supported by pupil groups such as the health and well-being group who take responsibility to create rules in the classroom and the playground which has had a positive impact on pupils' behaviour across the school. At breaktimes, many pupils choose to engage in activities led by their peers' reinforcing friendships across the school. Most pupils bring a healthy snack to school as part of the school's healthy school initiative. Nearly all pupils understand the need to make healthy choices, including being physically active. Many pupils choose to engage in afterschool activities including the disco dancing club, and other various sports clubs.

Most pupils across the school talk confidently about their learning. They work well when working with partners and in groups. Younger pupils readily engage in tasks and talk eagerly about them, for example when discussing the different materials used to build a chair for the class teddy. Older pupils speak enthusiastically to visitors about their work. Most pupils listen attentively and respond well to questions. They respond appropriately and give clear explanations of their ideas and thinking. Most pupils value the timely feedback from teachers and their peers and understand that this helps them to learn and improve their work and identify their next steps in learning.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of digital safety and know how to keep safe on-line. For example, through planned work from the local school liaison officer on how to be safe online. They understand not to speak to strangers or go to any unfamiliar digital sites.

Teaching and learning experiences

Staff have excellent working relationships with pupils. This creates a warm and caring ethos throughout the school, which supports learning well. Teachers and support staff work together successfully to provide effective strategies for promoting positive behaviours. This means that nearly all pupils know what behaviours are acceptable and do their best to listen to adults and work diligently.

Teachers provide lessons that motivate and engage pupils' interest effectively. Where teaching is most effective, teachers share lesson aims regularly to ensure that pupils understand the tasks they're undertaking. They link their activities to previous learning and refer to skills learnt previously effectively. In nearly all classes, teachers use skilful questioning techniques that build effectively on pupils' knowledge and extend their understanding further.

Teachers share ideas and resources collaboratively. They plan activities skilfully to ensure an appropriate level of challenge for nearly all pupils. Staff have high expectations of pupils, and they work together purposefully to nurture positive attitudes in pupils.

Teachers know their pupils well. They observe and assess the progress and development of pupils regularly and use the information sensibly to plan the next steps in their learning. In the best examples, they help pupils to understand their own strengths and areas for development. Teachers' verbal feedback during activities helps pupils to know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. In pupils' books, teachers provide feedback on the accuracy of their work, and occasionally on the quality of the content. However, in general, there is a for teachers to over direct pupils' learning, which limits opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills.

The school is developing a sound understanding of the Curriculum for Wales and staff work diligently to provide a wide variety of educational experiences for pupils. Planning for the systematic development of literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the school is at an early stage of development. Teachers ensure pupils receive ample opportunities to develop their basic skills during daily activities and develop these skills in relevant, cross-curricular tasks.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and takes into account the needs and context of its pupils. Staff include the school's locality well into its curriculum and utilises many different aspects such as geographical features, local amenities, and famous buildings. For example, staff support pupils to develop their Welsh oracy skills by visiting the local shop, compare areas that are natural and man-made, and visit Gregynog Hall regularly for different activities. In addition, teachers enhance learning opportunities effectively through the use of visitors to school and collaborating with other professionals. For example, older pupils develop their creative skills well, working alongside skilful educational practitioners to design and create mechanised puppets of animals.

The school provides pupils with suitable opportunities to influence what they learn. For example, younger pupils make suggestions about the topic they wish to learn about whilst older pupils suggest areas they could investigate as part of their topics. This ensures that teachers provide an appropriate range of interesting learning opportunities that extend pupils' knowledge and provide useful opportunities for pupils to develop a range of skills. For example, older pupils produce detailed and informative presentations following their individual research projects on workhouses.

Throughout the school, the learning environment is welcoming and stimulating. However, classrooms for younger pupils do not provide enough opportunity for pupils to experiment and learn through play. Opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their skills through the use of the school's extensive grounds for learning in the outdoors, are limited.

The school provides a stimulating range of additional learning experiences through the use of extracurricular clubs and a range of visits and residential opportunities. These enrich pupils' experiences, expand their knowledge, and develop their physical and team building skills well, for example when preparing pupils to perform in the Urdd Eisteddfod.

Across both English-medium and Welsh-medium streams, staff demonstrate a sense of pride in the Welsh language. In the best practice, where staff have a sound

knowledge and confidence in the use of Welsh, it is used effectively to support the development of pupils' skills in Welsh, especially their speaking skills.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring and inclusive learning environment, which has a positive impact on the development of pupils' social and emotional skills. Leaders prioritise and foster a shared approach to well-being, ensuring an atmosphere of respect between adults and pupils. This leads to pupils feeling safe and cared for within a trusting setting. All staff are adaptive to the pupils' needs and respond effectively to any emotional challenges, utilising a range of strategies and calm areas to support pupils. As a result, these responsive interventions have a beneficial effect on pupil well-being and behaviour.

The school has appropriate provision to support pupils with ALN. There is an inclusive approach, which is tailored effectively to the needs of pupils and has a beneficial effect on pupil progress towards their individual targets. The ALN co-ordinator works successfully with other staff to ensure that pupils' needs are identified early, and appropriate plans put in place to meet them. The use of one-page profiles ensures that staff have a thorough understanding of the needs of individuals and groups, setting clear targets which are regularly monitored and shared with parents.

The school successfully develops staff awareness and skills through training to support tailored provision for its learners. The school works well with a range of external agencies to ensure that specialist additional support is secured for pupils, for example from educational psychologists, team around the family and a local family crisis centre. As a result, many pupils make good progress from their starting points.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development successfully. Thoughtful and reflective assemblies develop themes that enable the moral and ethical development of pupils based on shared values such as respect and working as a team, which pupils are involved in drafting. Assemblies also support pupils to make good choices and highlight other relevant issues during anti-bullying week and safer internet day, in addition to opportunities for them to reflect on their spirituality. This is supported through purposeful classroom activities that support pupils to reflect on current affairs and different cultures and religions. Teachers encourage all pupils to contribute wisely to the community so that they develop as responsible citizens who are willing to help others.

The school has good arrangements to ensure pupils learn about the importance of healthy eating and drinking, and taking part in physical activities. Staff provide pupils with a range of valuable opportunities to engage in sport and physical activity. Extra-curricular sports clubs enhance pupils' physical development well, whilst additional competitive opportunities are provided to further pupils' enjoyment and engagement in an active lifestyle.

School provision supports an equitable range of pupils to take part in whole school decisions through its pupil groups. These are beginning to have an impact on the pupils' ownership of strategic decisions that affect them, for example the school council, in consultation with the governing body and the headteacher, have designed

playground markings for the newly tarmacked yard. The 'eco warriors' make sure that the school environment is litter free and have been a part of a county scheme to recycle old crisp packets used outside the school to make blankets for vulnerable people. These experiences enhance pupils learning experience and have a positive impact on their understanding of their local community.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding with clear arrangements for monitoring pupils' attendance and punctuality. Staff keep appropriate records of absences and contact parents in a timely manner to discuss any concerns about their children's attendance. External agencies are used effectively to support this as appropriate.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. There are robust policies in place and all staff know the correct procedures to follow. The school's curriculum supports pupil safeguarding, such as enabling pupils to know how to keep themselves safe personally and on-line and know whom they can turn to if they are worried.

Leadership and management

The headteacher leads with enthusiasm and a high level of care and consideration for pupils, staff, and parents. She has established a meaningful culture of trust, teamwork and drive for improvement across the school. She provides supportive and effective leadership and engages very well with all partners to share the vision of being 'friends together' and 'learning together'. Leaders facilitate a continuous focus on building and maintaining positive relationships and have a clear understanding of the needs of the pupils and the local community.

Leaders assign roles and responsibilities across the school appropriately. The headteacher leads by example and has high expectations for herself and the staff to provide pupils with a positive and supportive experiences in school. The school's improvement plan sets out the strategic direction of the school's improvement work clearly. There are appropriate timescales and success indicators in place to evaluate school priorities and both staff and governors are an integral part of this process. As a result, leaders have a strong understanding of the key strengths and areas for development. However, not all roles and whole school responsibilities are distributed robustly enough across the senior leadership team. As a result, senior leaders do not always monitor the self-evaluation processes sharply enough to identify important areas for development, such as developing pupils' independent learning skills. Overall, the school's improvement priorities link well to the key messages from the self-evaluation process and include the local and national context.

The governing body is well informed and committed to supporting the school. They have a valuable range of expertise and contribute well to school life and to its place in the local community. They understand the school's improvement priorities and the reasons that underpin them. They support leaders to implement and monitor improvement work appropriately, for example by participating in learning walks and listening to learners in their capacity as governors that have the responsibility for different areas of learning.

Governors make appropriate arrangements for healthy eating and drinking for pupils. School leaders manage finances thoughtfully and allocate funds to support improvement successfully. This includes making appropriate use of resources and grants to support groups of pupils, such as those eligible for free school meals. The school uses its pupil development grant funding effectively to ensure worthwhile support for pupils from low-income households. The school ensures that extra-curricular activities are diverse and accessible and that all pupils can take part in all learning experiences, for example, trips and visits.

Leaders link professional learning effectively to improvement priorities. They engage all staff in purposeful training to develop their professional knowledge and understanding of teaching approaches. For example, staff training on behaviour strategies has had a positive effect on pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning across the school.

Leaders and staff work effectively with local schools to develop approaches to teaching and learning that provide continuity for pupils, as they move to secondary education. For example, they participate in digital projects to progressively develop pupils' coding and animation skills. Leaders ensure that staff can access a wide range of professional learning opportunities. This includes taking part in action research with a university to better meet the needs of groups of pupils in their classes.

The school's relationship with parents is a strength and the continuous collaboration and communication promotes the school in its community extremely effectively. Leaders work thoughtfully to develop positive working relationships with parents and communicate with them well to keep them informed about current developments such as catchment area arrangements and curriculum workshops.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer 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/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) 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 undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- 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' 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 (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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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