



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

A report on

**Ysgol Betws Gwerfil Goch
Betws Gwerfil Goch
Corwen
LL21 9PY**

Date of inspection: June 2018

by

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

About Ysgol Betws Gwerfil Goch

The school is situated in the centre of the village of Betws Gwerfil Goch in Denbighshire. The school provides education for 31 pupils between 3 and 11 years old, including eight nursery pupils who attend the school in the afternoon. The school has two mixed-age classes, one in the foundation phase and one in key stage 2. The school is federated with Ysgol Bro Elwern.

Over a period of three years, around 6% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals, which is much lower than the national average of 19%. The school has identified around 10% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, which is lower than the national average of 21%.

All pupils are from white British backgrounds and around 68% come from Welsh-speaking homes.

The current headteacher began in post in September 2017 and is also the headteacher of Ysgol Bro Elwern as part of a federation of schools.

The school was last inspected in May 2010.

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

During their time at the school, many pupils make sound progress and achieve well. Most pupils develop good speaking, listening and reading skills. They are polite and respectful pupils who behave excellently around the school and in lessons. Nearly all develop as knowledgeable and moral citizens, and concentrate and persevere with their tasks.

Teaching is generally good, and teachers and staff provide an interesting curriculum, identifying pupils' needs well. The school is a warm and caring environment in which pupils' wellbeing is given a high priority.

Leaders set a clear strategic direction for the school within the federation. They identify strengths and weaknesses rigorously and plan sensibly in order to ensure improvements. They see the advantages of working within a federation of schools, and are beginning to use effective co-operation arrangements among all staff in order to share expertise and work on improving provision further.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Improve pupils' writing and numeracy skills across the curriculum in the foundation phase
- R2 Ensure that teachers' feedback enables pupils to know how to improve the standard of their work
- R3 Disseminate best teaching practice across the federation in order to ensure an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

On entry to the school, many pupils' skills correspond with what is expected for their age. During their time at the school, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make sound progress and achieve well.

From an early age, most pupils listen attentively to adults and each other. They acquire vocabulary and syntax effectively, and use them confidently when responding to adults and when talking with their peers. In key stage 2, most pupils develop very sound oracy skills in Welsh and English. They contribute well to discussions when considering facts and people's views about the flooding of the Tryweryn Valley, and express their opinions clearly and maturely and use polished vocabulary in Welsh.

Most pupils' reading skills are developing successfully and they show an obvious interest in reading. In the foundation phase, many read confidently and fluently, express an opinion about the content of their books and describe the events appropriately. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils are keen readers who read fictional and factual books confidently. They show a good understanding of the main ideas, events and characters. Nearly all pupils gather information from printed sources and the internet confidently, and use it effectively in their work, for example when gathering and recording information about rivers in Wales.

In the foundation phase, pupils' writing skills are developing suitably. The youngest pupils experiment with mark making and use a variety of media to produce pieces of early writing. Reception pupils are beginning to write conventionally by using words, phrases and short sentences, for example when describing fruit in their topic work. By the end of the foundation phase, a majority of pupils write for different purposes appropriately and use language and words that are suitable for the subjects, for example when putting instructions in order to create a pancake recipe. Most pupils begin their sentences in various ways when writing in their diaries, use conjunctions to show effect and usually punctuate correctly. However, the over-use of ready-made worksheets hinders pupils' ability to write independently and extensively enough across the curriculum.

In key stage 2, most pupils develop good writing skills in Welsh and English. They use these skills sensibly in other areas of the curriculum. For example, many write concisely and critically when recording the results of their science investigations. Most use their imagination well, for example in a diary about the experience of a child during the Second World War. They structure their work in orderly paragraphs and interesting sentences that are punctuated correctly, for example when producing a newspaper report on the flooding of the Tryweryn Valley.

Throughout the foundation phase, many pupils develop an appropriate mathematical understanding of measurement, money, time and data handling. In their theme work on food, they use appropriate equipment in order to calculate the weight of different fruits, record in grams correctly, and present their results in an attractive pictogram.

However, pupils do not apply their numeracy skills robustly enough across the curriculum.

In key stage 2, most pupils apply their number, measurement, shape and space skills successfully across the curriculum. They use their understanding of number when calculating the differences between the populations in capital cities around the world correctly. They use their measurement, shape and money skills effectively in combination in order to design a house, for example by discovering the area and the cost of materials for the floor. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils apply their skills effectively when completing scientific investigations, and present their results in graphs correctly.

Many pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developing appropriately. In the foundation phase, many pupils record and print a pictogram of pupils' school transport methods confidently. Most use art software skilfully to create pictures of fish and add text to describe them. In key stage 2, most pupils use their ICT skills suitably to support their work in other subjects. They use a word processor to present their written work coherently and attractively, for example when creating a portrayal of Hedd Wyn and when creating a fact file about countries around the world. By the end of the stage, many use spreadsheets purposefully to produce tables and graphs, for example to show rainfall at Llyn Celyn and the length of different rivers. Pupils' understanding of the importance of e-safety is sound.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

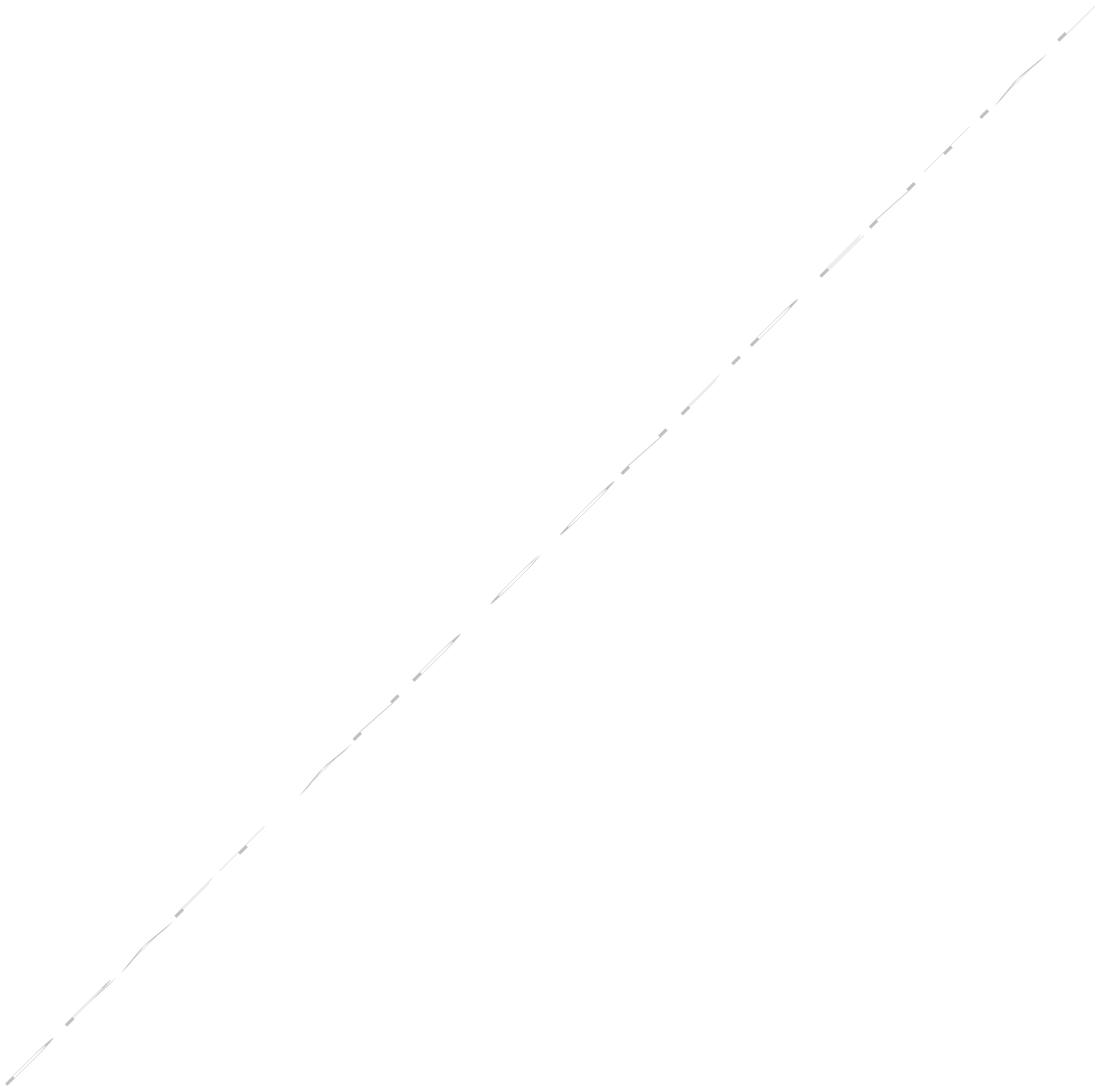
Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school and are proud of their achievements. The school's inclusive and caring ethos helps them to feel safe, and they know whom to approach if there are any problems. Nearly all pupils' behaviour is excellent around the school and in lessons. Pupils are also extremely polite towards visitors, adults and other pupils.

By contributing knowledgeably in lessons and identifying foods that are high in fat or sugar, nearly all pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily and the effect this has on the body. They understand the importance of exercise, and many take advantage of opportunities to join in with various activities that are available at the school, such as sports clubs.

Most pupils show an interest in their work and suggest ideas about what they would like to learn. They listen attentively and consider the views of others maturely. Many pupils enjoy the additional challenges they receive in the classroom, and nearly all concentrate and persevere very well with their tasks. In key stage 2, older pupils work effectively with younger pupils and undertake responsibilities seriously. They guide discussions maturely and calmly in order to ensure that all individuals are given a fair chance. This is a strong feature.

Nearly all pupils develop as knowledgeable and moral citizens. They communicate effectively and enjoy opportunities to contribute to the activities of the various councils. They develop as confident learners with the ability to work independently, when they are given opportunities to do so. Most pupils are aware of their individual targets to improve their skills.

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Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. For the most part, it succeeds in engaging pupils' interest and develops their skills, knowledge and understanding soundly as they move through the school. Teachers and assistants are exceptional language models who encourage pupils to speak Welsh successfully. They ensure good opportunities for pupils to build on their previous experiences, by forming a series of coherent, consecutive lessons. In the foundation phase, the classroom assistant provides very effective support for learning and teaching. Across the school, teachers and learning assistants know their pupils well and use a variety of learning strategies appropriately. On the whole, they tailor class activities suitably to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. However, a minority of activities in the foundation phase do not challenge pupils to achieve to the best of their ability.

Teachers identify pupils' understanding through skilful questioning, and monitor their learning through purposeful assessments. They provide pupils with useful oral feedback and provide written comments that praise pupils for good work. However, the quality of comments to help pupils to know what they need to do in order to improve their work is inconsistent. In general, teachers provide purposeful and useful opportunities for pupils to assess their own work and that of other pupils, where appropriate.

Schemes of work for the curriculum are of a good standard and give appropriate consideration to the requirements of the literacy and numeracy framework. The curriculum builds systematically on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills as they move through the school. Teachers plan activities that are of interest to pupils, and provide opportunities for them to contribute to what they learn. For example, in their theme 'remembering', teachers welcome pupils' ideas about famous footballers, and in the theme 'the forest', they tailor lessons to consider different habitats and animals successfully. However, there are not enough opportunities in the foundation phase for pupils to apply their writing or numeracy skills across the curriculum.

The school provides effective support programmes for pupils to improve their skills, for example in order to strengthen pupils' spelling and reading skills.

For the most part, the school promotes the principles of the foundation phase appropriately. Teachers and leaders plan and present suitable opportunities for pupils to use the outdoors in order to develop their learning and skills. However, too many activities in the foundation phase have a tendency to be led by adults, and this limits the opportunities for pupils to make independent choices about their learning.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a welcoming and happy community that prioritises pupils' wellbeing. Staff ensure a warm and caring environment, and that each individual's needs are met. The advantages of a healthy lifestyle and developing pupils' physical health are promoted effectively across the curriculum and in a number of extra-curricular activities, such as Urdd competitions.

The school has appropriate systems to identify and track pupils' progress, including analysing a variety of information, such as standardised tests. Leaders make suitable use of the results to arrange support or additional challenge for pupils, for example to strengthen their literacy skills. Classroom assistants support pupils effectively in a variety of ways, which include working with groups within the classroom and giving detailed attention to their Welsh oracy. Communication between the school and parents is effective, and information that is shared during parents' evenings and in written reports are clear and useful.

The very few pupils with additional learning needs are identified at an early stage, and there are suitable arrangements in place to support them. Individual education plans are clear and are reviewed regularly. The school works effectively with parents and external agencies to support pupils.

The school has effective arrangements to promote values such as respect for others, and these help pupils to develop as responsible citizens. Collective worship sessions and periods for reflection contribute effectively towards pupils' spiritual and personal development, and provide good opportunities for pupils to reflect and develop their thinking skills. Teachers encourage pupils to persevere for extended periods, for example in whole-school assemblies and in lessons, successfully. This is reinforced by arranging opportunities for pupils to perform in a Christmas concert in the local chapel and by competing in the Urdd Eisteddfod. The activities of the school council and eco council provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills, for example when organising pyjama days to raise money for charities. Regular opportunities for older pupils to lead activities, such as organising an anti-bullying assembly for younger pupils, also help to develop confident and thoughtful pupils.

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

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher has a clear vision that is based on creating a learning community in which pupils enjoy opportunities to develop and achieve well. The headteacher shares this vision clearly with the staff of the schools in the federation, members of the governing body, parents and pupils. As a result, all stakeholders have a good awareness of the performance of the schools in the federation, and of pupils' achievement and progress. The headteacher has robust and effective leadership skills. Within a short time, he has established a number of strategies that have enriched provision and reinforced a sense of unity across the federation. As a result, all staff work together effectively in order to raise pupils' standards, achievement and wellbeing.

By working closely with the headteacher and leaders, the governing body has a sound understanding of its responsibilities. It has up-to-date knowledge of the schools' performance, and its role as a critical friend is developing suitably. It makes effective use of the findings of monitoring processes to make strategic decisions about the development of the schools in the federation.

Self-evaluation reports are fair and honest documents, which reflect the strengths and areas for improvement in both of the federation's schools well. They are based on valid first-hand evidence, such as lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. The headteacher summarises and uses information from these processes skilfully to set a sensible direction to improve the schools. The school development plan for the schools in the federation includes a manageable number of sensible priorities. Leaders identify purposeful activities in order to meet the priorities, and earmark resources and staff effectively in order to fulfil them.

Leaders have suitable performance management processes in order to develop staff and ensure that their work is of good quality. Staff have appropriate access to a relevant range of continuous professional development and useful training. Staff work together successfully within the federation, which is beginning to strengthen their ability to improve provision and raise standards, for example when planning curricular areas jointly and sharing expertise. However, it is too early to see the full effect of this co-operation.

Leaders ensure that the school budget is used appropriately in order to improve provision.

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.

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