



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

A report on

**Ysgol Bro Elwern
Gwyddelwern
Corwen
LL21 9DF**

Date of inspection: June 2018

by

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

About Ysgol Bro Elwern

Ysgol Bro Elwern is situated in the village of Gwyddelwern, near Corwen in Denbighshire. The school is federated with Ysgol Betws Gwerfil Goch.

There are 51 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, and they are taught in two mixed-age classes. Around 35% of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. Over a period of three years, around 10% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the national average of 19%. The school has identified around 16% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, which is lower than the national average of 21%. Nearly all pupils are from white British backgrounds.

The school was last inspected in November 2015. The headteacher was appointed to the role as executive headteacher with responsibility for both schools in the federation in September 2017. He was appointed to the role permanently in April 2018.

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 Elwern is a happy and caring Welsh community in which most pupils make good progress. They feel safe at school and enjoy learning in a very homely and inclusive environment. The pupils' relationship with each other and the care that they show towards others across the school are strong features.

Teachers and support staff work effectively with the rest of the staff in the federation in order to ensure rich learning experiences for pupils. Leaders set a clear strategic direction within the federation. They have a thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development, and implement sensible plans in order to ensure improvements. Leaders know the advantages of working as a federation of schools and develop effective co-operation arrangements among all staff in order to share expertise and work on improving provision.

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 Disseminate best teaching practice in the federation in order to ensure an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils
- R2 Ensure that teachers' feedback enables pupils to know how to improve the standard of their work
- R3 Expand opportunities for pupils to make decisions about the school's life and development

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, most pupils' Welsh communication and mathematics skills are lower than the level expected for their age. However, most make good progress during their time at the school.

Most pupils develop Welsh oracy skills quickly and talk confidently in a wide variety of contexts. A strong feature is the way in which pupils across the school use the Welsh language naturally and spontaneously with their peers when working and in informal situations. Most are able to discuss maturely and express an opinion by providing reasons for their views. For example, pupils in Year 2 discuss the necessary properties for creating a home for a caterpillar.

Most pupils' reading skills are sound. Pupils in the foundation phase develop early reading skills confidently. By the end of Year 2, most develop as mature readers who use sound phonic skills to interpret unfamiliar words. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils are mature and skilful readers, and read to the same level in Welsh and English. Most express an opinion about structure and form with increasing confidence, and gather information from different sources to enrich their work, for example when researching the history of flooding the Tryweryn Valley. They talk confidently about their books and make wise choices about their reading material.

Most pupils develop as confident writers from an early age. The youngest pupils use their knowledge of letters to build phrases and words. In Year 2, many write to a good standard, for example when creating an imaginative piece about the red dragon. Most vary the start of their sentences effectively and use conjunctions and adjectives confidently. They are able to gather information from text and use it effectively to create a factual report about insects. Most pupils in key stage 2 write interesting extended pieces in various forms, often in rich contexts across the curriculum. For example, they emulate parts of Anne Frank's diaries as part of their work on the theme 'remembering', and write a biography of Michael Morpurgo. Most show a sound understanding of different forms of writing, and their spelling and punctuation are sound.

Most pupils' mathematics skills across the school are good. The youngest children gain confidence when counting and recognising numbers from an early age. Most pupils in the foundation phase develop sound skills through rich practical activities, which enable them to develop a sound understanding of number, shape and handling data. They are able to use data to create simple graphs and interpret them confidently, for example when comparing the height of different animals from the story of the Gruffalo.

Most pupils in key stage 2 have a sound knowledge of number, shape and handling data. They are able to use the most effective method and make their own decisions when solving problems and comparing answers. By the end of key stage 2, many investigate confidently, for example when comparing the relationship between miles and kilometres. They calculate the median, mode and mean confidently when considering the age of soldiers from the school's area who were killed during the First World War.

Most pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are sound across the school. Most pupils in the foundation phase use software confidently when developing an understanding of letters and vocabulary. They record their work independently and confidently by using an 'app' that enables them to take a picture of the work and share it in the group files. Most pupils in key stage 2 use a good range of equipment confidently when reinforcing their numeracy and literacy, and when researching information independently. They are able to create effective presentations by using different software, spreadsheets and elementary databases. They have a sound understanding of the rules of staying safe on the internet.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils feel safe at school. Most have a sound understanding of what they need to do to stay healthy. They make wise decisions in terms of food and drink, and understand the importance of exercise and healthy activities, such as playing football or using the climbing wall. Many pupils take advantage of opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities, such as sports and art clubs. They talk confidently about how to stay safe online, and appreciate the input of the police education officer and visits to Danger Point, which have contributed well to their understanding of safety.

Most pupils enjoy school. They have a close and nurturing working relationship with staff, and they treat visitors with respect. They behave well during break time and lunchtime. Most pupils treat their peers with respect during lessons, and have the skills to work together effectively in small groups. They are caring towards each other, for example when making regular and effective use of the 'Ffrindiau Ffeind' (Kind Friends) system, which gives key stage 2 pupils responsibility for looking after younger pupils. This adds significantly to the school's sense of community.

The school council is active and supports the school's current priorities appropriately, for example by contributing to creating a code of conduct and managing a fundraising budget. Following a visit to County Hall, they have learnt more about their rights and the democratic process. However, their role in leading their activities and making decisions has not been developed in full. A few pupils shoulder additional responsibilities, for example as members of the eco council or the school's Digital Wizards, who support children effectively with ICT.

Most pupils develop well as ethical and knowledgeable citizens. For example, they have a good understanding of the importance of looking after their environment through curricular work and additional activities, such as caring for the school's gardens and ensuring that the school grounds are clear of rubbish.

Nearly all pupils show a positive attitude towards learning and enjoy undertaking tasks in their lessons. They cope well with new challenges and persevere when facing difficulties. In the best practice, pupils develop well as independent learners by making decisions and working confidently in the different areas, both inside and outside the classroom. They work effectively with their peers to solve problems and choose the level of challenge themselves. Most pupils record their practical work with a very good level of independence by using a tablet computer.

In the foundation phase, pupils are ready to learn promptly at the beginning of lessons and move freely between activities in the classroom and in the outdoor area.

Most concentrate well in lessons and behave maturely. However, in key stage 2, a few pupils sometimes take too much time to settle at the beginning of lessons and when transferring from one activity to another. Once they have started their work, most cope well with a variety of tasks and concentrate successfully on their work.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The standard of teaching is good across the school. All staff are highly effective and consistent language models for pupils. Teachers and support staff question successfully in order to encourage pupils to express an opinion and discuss with others, for example when discussing their work on the Second World War or the flooding of the Tryweryn Valley.

Teachers make effective use of a range of teaching methods in order to encourage pupils to apply themselves fully to their activities. As a result, most pupils recall previous learning successfully. Teachers have a sound understanding of the requirements of the foundation phase curriculum and the national curriculum, and they provide tasks and challenges that engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm. As a result, most pupils apply themselves fully to their learning.

In the foundation phase, teachers nurture pupils' independence skilfully. They work together effectively in order to provide rich opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in a range of contexts across the areas of learning. For example, they provide opportunities for pupils in the nursery class to develop early literacy skills through practical activities in the indoor and outdoor learning areas. Teachers challenge and stretch pupils of different abilities to develop their skills in challenging and interesting contexts. As a result, most make sound progress.

In key stage 2, teaching is robust in most lessons. Teachers plan an effective range of activities that engage pupils' interest. Pupils are given opportunities to discuss with their peers and form an opinion. However, not all activities challenge a few more able pupils to develop to the best of their ability.

The standard of teachers' oral feedback is sound across the school. Feedback is constructive and helps pupils to understand and evaluate their progress. There are useful opportunities for pupils to assess the work of their peers in order to evaluate progress, and regular use of improvement targets. Many pupils have a sound understanding of the effect of these processes on their work. However, the standard of teachers' written feedback is inconsistent and does not always provide pupils with clear guidance on how to develop their work further.

Long, medium and short-term schemes of work have been established firmly and teachers use them consistently across the school. As a result, most pupils apply themselves fully to their learning and make sound progress. The curriculum builds effectively on pupils' previous learning and ensures that nearly all pupils participate. Planning for literacy is effective. There are regular and valuable opportunities for pupils of all abilities to develop their oracy, reading and writing skills in various contexts. As a result, most pupils make good progress. Planning for numeracy is well established. There are rich opportunities for pupils to develop different elements of number in an effective range of contexts, in line with their age and ability.

Planning for developing ICT is embedded well across the school. As a result, most pupils use a range of equipment confidently and make good progress.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has recently established a tracking system that shows pupils' progress on their journey through the school effectively. As a result, staff have a good understanding of each child's current performance and what needs to be done to support them to improve. Staff use the system effectively in order to identify pupils who need additional interventions. The school makes suitable arrangements for them, for example by making use of specific numeracy and literacy programmes. The school has forged robust partnerships with a variety of stakeholders in order to support pupils' learning, for example by using the county council's specialist services or providing technology sessions in co-operation with a local construction company, which reinforces many pupils' skills successfully.

The school has robust systems for tracking the progress of pupils with additional learning needs, including creating and reviewing individual plans systematically. These plans ensure that most pupils make good progress from their various starting points. Leaders, teachers and support staff work effectively with external agencies to ensure that children with emotional needs take advantage of the opportunities that the school provides. As a result, many pupils cope with challenges maturely.

Teachers have a productive relationship with most pupils' parents and share useful information about the school's work and their children's progress. The headteacher has recently introduced a system of meeting with parents to present information and, as a result, they have a better understanding of some national priorities, such as the emphasis on literacy and numeracy.

Through science lessons and the use of a personal and social education resource, the school ensures that pupils have the necessary knowledge to make wise decisions about eating and drinking healthily and keeping fit. Staff also use external providers effectively to ensure that pupils understand the dangers associated with the misuse of medicine and how to stay safe online.

Pupils are given a few opportunities to take responsibility in the school by undertaking different roles. However, on the whole, the work of specific groups such as the school council and the eco committee have not yet been developed in full. The school's close links with the community lead to providing valuable opportunities to learn about the world of work. For example, the school works purposefully with a local construction company on a digital filming project to promote pupils' understanding of employment opportunities in the field of wind turbines. The local element is also a strength in the school's schemes of work, which provide a large number of opportunities for children to learn about their locality and local culture. The school ensures that pupils are given valuable opportunities to celebrate their culture by competing and performing in eisteddfodau and art and craft competitions.

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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