



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

**A report on**

**Ysgol Sarn Bach  
Sarn Bach  
Pwllheli  
Gwynedd  
LL53 7LF**

**Date of inspection: October 2017**

**by**

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

## About Ysgol Sarn Bach

Ysgol Gynradd Sarn Bach is situated in the village of Sarn Bach near Pwllheli, in Gwynedd local authority. The school serves the local area in addition to a number of surrounding villages. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work, and English is introduced as a subject in key stage 2.

There are 52 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including three full-time nursery age pupils. Approximately 47% of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes, and very few are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Approximately 9% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is lower than the national percentage (19%). The school has identified 21% of pupils as having additional learning needs.

The headteacher was appointed to the post in April 2017, and the school was last inspected in March 2011.

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

Pupils' wellbeing is at the heart of the school's work. Nearly all pupils are well behaved, are eager to learn and treat others with respect. During their time at the school, many make good progress in their learning from their starting points. Teachers plan interesting learning experiences that engage pupils' interest and motivate them to learn. One of the school's strengths is the caring ethos that exists within it. The school benefits from clear leadership that is based on raising standards and ensuring pupils' wellbeing. There are comprehensive arrangements in place to evaluate the school's work and ensure improvement.

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

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Refine plans to ensure that pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills build systematically on previous ones
- R2 Strengthen the progress-tracking system to focus on specific groups of pupils
- R3 Develop the role of governors so that they hold leaders to account effectively

## **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, a majority of pupils' basic skills are below what is expected for their age. As they move through the school, many make good progress in their learning from their starting points. Pupils with additional learning needs and more able pupils make good progress and achieve well. Most pupils recall previous knowledge effectively. Most use their thinking skills successfully, for example when preparing skilful letters to complain about arrangements to stop offering sports in local schools.

Most pupils' Welsh oral skills are developing well across the school. In the foundation phase, most speak naturally and with increasing accuracy. They are very keen to discuss their work and provide explanations about what they are doing. In key stage 2, most pupils express themselves clearly in Welsh and English. They are very keen to contribute to class discussions by using subject vocabulary confidently when discussing topics. They conduct mature conversations and use varied syntax and interesting phrases.

Most pupils in the foundation phase read well for different purposes in Welsh. They are very willing to discuss characters in their books meaningfully. Many pupils in key stage 2 read confidently in Welsh and English. More able pupils use voice intonation effectively, which confirms their understanding of what they are reading. Pupils make good use of their higher order reading skills to find specific information when researching different topics in history and science. Across the school, pupils have a range of very effective reading strategies.

By the end of the foundation phase, most pupils write independently with increasing accuracy. Most older pupils write at length for different purposes, including writing letters and imaginative stories. Most present their work very methodically and neatly, and punctuate correctly. By Year 6, most pupils use their writing skills in a range of contexts across the curriculum; for example, they produce effective research on the censuses of 1851, 1881 and 1981. Most pupils write methodically and present information effectively. The extended writing work of the most able pupils is of high quality, for example when they present research on Malala and her speech.

Pupils' numeracy skills are developing well across the foundation phase. By the end of the phase, many use a range of number skills effectively and confidently in a variety of contexts to confirm their use across the curriculum. They solve problems successfully, for example when changing pounds to Australian dollars. Most discover temperature and read temperatures below zero. They solve problems relating to distance and weight effectively. In key stage 2, most pupils have a sound understanding of numeracy strategies. They apply their skills capably and develop appropriate strategies to solve problems relating to their study of the temperature of different planets in the solar system. They gather information and results systematically and present their findings correctly. They show a good understanding of range, mode, mean and median when conducting research into dinosaurs' weights.

Most pupils in the foundation phase are confident when using a range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively to create and display their work across the areas of learning. By Year 2, most create good labelled electronic pictures of a robin and effective graphs of their favourite colours. They animate a series of pictures successfully to show how to clean teeth. In key stage 2, most pupils use the internet successfully to search for information. They use a wide variety of ICT programs for different purposes across the curriculum.

### **Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good**

Nearly all pupils have a thorough understanding of the importance of eating and drinking healthily. Many pupils in the foundation phase talk confidently about which foods are healthy or less healthy for them, and which foods have a harmful effect on their teeth. Older pupils have a sound understanding of the need to stay healthy by drinking water, eating sensibly and taking part in physical activities in order to ensure their fitness. Pupils appreciate opportunities to take part in gymnastics and swimming at the leisure centre, which enables them to take part in competitions. Opportunities to go on residential visits, for example to Plas Menai, make a positive contribution to developing their fitness and social skills.

Nearly all pupils are well-behaved and treat each other, staff and visitors with respect. The school's oldest pupils are very caring towards the youngest pupils; for example, the 'faithful friends' (ffrindiau ffyddlon) ensure that the youngest pupils are safe and happy on the swimming bus. Most pupils are confident that the school responds promptly to any concerns they may have and deal well with any cases of bullying.

Pupils take regular advantage of valuable opportunities to express an opinion on what they learn by choosing the term's theme. Each week, pupils express their opinion on the activities that they would like to do next within the theme.

Most pupils' attitudes towards learning is one of the school's strengths. Nearly all pupils are enthusiastic and work diligently for extended periods when completing their activities. They support each other's learning effectively by receiving support from their peers before asking for support from an adult. This develops their independent skills and prepares them to be helpful adults. From an early age, most pupils have a sound understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. The youngest pupils explain the school's marking code clearly and understand how this helps them to improve their work.

Most pupils are aware of the importance of attending school regularly and punctually.

### **Teaching and learning experiences: Good**

The quality of teaching across the school is good. This is based on a close working relationship between staff and pupils. Teachers provide high quality tasks that engage nearly all pupils' interest and challenge them well to achieve high standards. Teachers and learning assistants know pupils well and tailor class activities to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities successfully. Most teachers have high expectations of their pupils and use a variety of learning strategies effectively, including probing questions, in order to develop previous knowledge and extend pupils' understanding

successfully. Nearly all teachers manage their classrooms effectively, and promote good behaviour and encourage engagement in learning. Teachers ensure that their lessons have a suitable pace, which leads to high levels of commitment among pupils.

The school has improved the use of assessment for learning strategies. This ensures that pupils are given valuable opportunities to assess their own work and that of their peers against specific success criteria. Nearly all teachers provide effective and sensible feedback, both orally and in writing, to move learning forward.

The school plans interesting learning experiences that engage pupils' interest and motivates them to learn successfully. These experiences meet the requirements of the foundation phase and the National Curriculum in full. Schemes of work are suitable and respond appropriately to the Literacy and Numeracy Framework. On the whole, they identify good opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills across different areas. However, at times, long-term plans are not purposeful enough to ensure that skills are built systematically enough. Provision ensures that most ICT skills are developed well.

All members of staff model the Welsh language to a very high standard and they encourage pupils to use and refine their language frequently in various daily activities. Across the school, staff ensure a good balance between adult-led activities and purposeful opportunities for pupils to work independently. Routine planning enables teachers to be flexible enough to respond to pupils' ideas and interests. Across the school, teachers provide enough effective opportunities for pupils to make decisions in relation to their learning. For example, in key stage 2, there are frequent opportunities for pupils to contribute to class themes and, this term, they have voted for the topic 'sports'.

The school has a natural Welsh ethos that ignites pupils' pride in the Welsh language and Welsh heritage. The school takes advantage of local and national resources to expand pupils' understanding of Wales and its culture. For example, staff organise valuable visits each year to Bardsey Island, Plas Menai and Plas Tan y Bwlch, which develop pupils' independent and social skills successfully.

The school provides a wide range of stimulating experiences for pupils to learn about sustainability. For example, the school is rearing three chickens in a coop that has been made by parents in order for them to lay eggs to sell. Older pupils also choose a theme on the environment, and they look in particular at the effect of recycling on the environment.

### **Care, support and guidance: Good**

Pupils feel safe and happy at the school, and recognise that the teachers are friendly and approachable when they need support. Staff create a caring ethos at the school, in which everyone is respected and valued. The learning environment encourages pupils to take pride in their work and to contribute significantly to school life. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Pupils are given a number of specific opportunities to shoulder responsibilities. For example, they are members of the school council, the eco committee or are road safety officers, and the 'Faithful Friends' ('Ffrindiau Ffyddlon') are very effective in developing a strong sense of responsibility among the older pupils. Before starting a new theme in the classroom, pupils are given suitable opportunities to suggest ideas about what they would like to study. After creating a shortlist, pupils in key stage 2, for example, vote and select a specific theme for each term in turn.

The school's staff know pupils and their families well. As a result, they have a robust and purposeful relationship with them, which supports the school's robust values successfully. This expands the care, guidance and support for pupils well. The school gathers and considers parents' views through beneficial questionnaires and meetings; for example, their views are considered when reviewing policies and planning future developments.

The school has effective procedures to encourage pupils to eat and drink healthily. Staff ensure that pupils understand the importance of exercising and swimming regularly. Pupils enjoy opportunities to play hockey, rugby, rounders and football.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively through curricular activities, assemblies and creative events. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect on the problems of their fellow pupils and people who are suffering around the world. The 'Where in the World' ('Ble yn y Byd') and 'Remembrance Tree' ('Coeden Gofio') noticeboards in the hall confirm the emphasis that the school places on courtesy. Pupils are given valuable opportunities to compete in Eisteddfodau and to attend residential centres. Provision for personal and social education is successful and, as a result, most pupils develop a sound understanding of respect and the importance of considering each other's points of view.

The school has a suitable procedure for tracking pupils' progress and achievement, and staff use it regularly to help them to provide activities for them. However, the school does not currently make specific use of the procedure to track the development of specific groups of pupils in enough detail to enable leaders to evaluate the true effect of provision on their progress.

The quality of provision for learners with additional learning needs is thorough and effective. The school identifies pupils' needs at an early stage and intervenes, where necessary. Individual education plans are of good quality. They are detailed and include achievable targets that are reviewed regularly. The school works closely with parents and external agencies when reviewing the progress of these learners.

Most pupils are aware of their targets and know what they need to do to improve their work.

### **Leadership and management: Good**

The headteacher has a clear vision and high expectations for the school. She succeeds in sharing this vision very effectively with staff, governors, parents and pupils. Since being appointed, and in a very short period of time, she has created a robust strategic direction that is based on raising standards and ensuring pupils' wellbeing. The headteacher has gained the respect of the staff and there is an obvious ethos of very close co-operation.

All members of staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities, and they fulfil them effectively. The school's staffing structure is clear and all members of staff have a detailed and up-to-date job description. Staff meetings are held regularly and focus clearly on priorities for improvement.

Leaders have implemented a number of appropriate procedures recently to set firmer foundations for raising standards. Through skilful use of rigorous performance management procedures, which include teachers and support staff, leaders succeed in holding staff to account successfully for their performance.

The school responds well to national and local priorities, including improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. It is also preparing purposefully to implement the Digital Competence Framework.

Governors are very supportive of the school's work, meet regularly and fulfil their duties conscientiously. The headteacher's thorough reports ensure that they have relevant information about the school's performance. They analyse a range of performance data intelligently and they have a sound understanding of the content of the school's current development plan and the priorities for improvement. However, governors do not hold leaders to account effectively enough.

Leaders and managers have an accurate understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. They make successful use of first-hand evidence on the quality of learning and teaching to monitor pupils' achievement. Self-evaluation procedures give suitable consideration to the views of pupils and parents on aspects of the school's life. The school development plan is detailed and is an effective working document, which guides the school's work successfully. Priorities in the school development plan derive directly from areas for development that have been identified in the self-evaluation document. An appropriate emphasis is placed on raising standards and improving the quality of provision. The school monitors progress against the targets that have been identified carefully.

Leaders ensure that staff are given valuable opportunities to develop professionally. For example, the training that was provided to develop assessment for learning strategies has led to effective use of these strategies in most classes. Teachers are given opportunities to undertake courses to develop aspects of ICT in the local authority and to support newly-qualified teachers.

The school is staffed appropriately and leaders make effective use of individuals' expertise to enrich teaching and learning; for example, specialists are used to teach subjects such as music, language and physical education. Leaders manage the budget very carefully and ensure that expenditure links well with plans for improvement. The school makes good use of the pupil development grant to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

The school has a range of resources of an appropriate quality, and they are managed well. The environment is stimulating and displays on the walls celebrate pupils' achievements well. The outdoor areas include a range of purposeful equipment to develop pupils' social and physical skills. As a result, they benefit from a vast learning area that motivates their learning appropriately. The building is well maintained.

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales))

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

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

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

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