



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

A report on

**Ysgol Betws-y-Coed
Bro Gethin
Betws-y-Coed
Conwy
LL24 0BP**

Date of inspection: September 2019

by

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

About Ysgol Betws-y-Coed

Ysgol Gynradd Betws-y-Coed is situated on the outskirts of the village of Betws-y-Coed in Conwy local authority. There are 27 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes.

Over a three-year-period, around 11% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the national average of 18%. Around 14% of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. Welsh is the main medium of teaching, and the aim is for all pupils to be fluent in Welsh and English by the end of key stage 2.

The school has identified around 32% of its pupils as having special educational needs, which is higher than the national percentage of 21%.

The school was last inspected in October 2010. Since March 2016, the school has been part of a formal federation with Ysgol Gynradd Dolwyddelan and Ysgol Capel Garmon, which share one executive headteacher and one governing body. The headteacher was appointed to the post in March 2016.

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

The school is an inclusive learning community, in which all pupils are respected and developed as well-rounded and responsible individuals. Great emphasis is placed on promoting pupils' Welshness in an area that receives a large number of newcomers regularly.

One of the school's strengths is the way in which teachers plan practical and creative experiences within a broad and balanced curriculum, which develops pupils' enthusiasm and curiosity. Through rich activities, pupils' knowledge of their local area and Wales is developed very successfully. This ignites pupils' pride in the Welshness and culture well.

The headteacher was appointed formally to the role of head of the federation in March 2016. She has a clear vision for Ysgol Betws-y-Coed and its place within the federation. As a result, pupils are given regular and valuable opportunities to network with other pupils in a range of activities. However, staff roles and responsibilities are not defined clearly enough across the federation in order to maintain and improve provision and raise standards 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	Adequate and needs improvement

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen leadership at all levels in order to promote close co-operation between all staff in the federation
- R2 Strengthen self-evaluation procedures and planning for improvement across the federation
- R3 Ensure that governors discharge their statutory duties fully
- R4 Raise standards of reading and writing in Welsh
- R5 Ensure that teachers' feedback enables pupils to improve their work

What happens next

The school will produce an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations from the inspection. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Good

During their time at the school, most pupils, including those with special educational needs and latecomers to the school, make good progress in their learning from their starting points. They apply their thinking and creative skills in a wide range of rich areas of learning.

Although most pupils in the reception class have oral Welsh skills that are lower than the expected standard on entry to the school, they learn the language quickly and use it appropriately in learning situations. Staff take advantage of regular and valuable opportunities to enrich spoken language, which contributes well towards most pupils' oracy skills. Most pupils in the nursery class are beginning to recognise the form and sound of letters well. Most pupils listen and respond well to instructions from adults. At the top of the foundation phase, most pupils speak confidently in a range of situations, for example when discussing their visit to Caernarfon castle. A few more able pupils respond maturely to the legend of Gelert and express their feelings about the legend's sadness maturely. In key stage 2, most pupils build effectively on their oral skills in both languages. They speak very confidently about the project to design a car and discuss the design steps clearly, and when discussing their mathematical investigations.

Many pupils' reading skills are developing suitably in both languages in the foundation phase. They have a sound understanding of what they read and use appropriate strategies when reading unfamiliar words. Many pupils' reading skills develop suitably in key stage 2. They discuss the content of the text confidently and refer to specific parts of a book when discussing their favourite characters. Although many pupils have a suitable understanding of the text, lack of fluency and expression affect the flow and ease of reading of a few pupils when reading Welsh text. Most use their higher-order reading skills and translanguaging skills very successfully, for example to gather information about famous composers and write an historical portrayal.

In the foundation phase, many pupils develop their ideas sensibly in written work by using clear sentences and purposeful punctuation. A few more able pupils vary their sentences, use idioms and use conjugated verb forms successfully to enrich their work, for example when writing a portrayal of Tomi the cat. Many pupils' writing skills are developed effectively in key stage 2 and, by the end of the stage, they have a sound awareness of different writing genres, for example when writing a newspaper article based on the flooding of the Tryweryn valley in Welsh and a biography of Roald Dahl in English. On the whole, many pupils punctuate their work correctly. However, a few pupils' Welsh syntax is not robust enough. Pupils do not apply their free and extended writing skills regularly enough in theme work.

Many pupils across the school have a sound awareness of the concepts of number, shape and data. In the foundation phase, they apply their numeracy skills consistently in a wide range of contexts, for example when calculating the cost of a hotel and a bus journey from Llanrwst to Llandudno for a visit to Caernarfon castle. In key stage 2, many pupils calculate the area of regular and irregular shapes correctly and apply this skill successfully, for example when planning a school garden.

Most pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are sound across the school. In the foundation phase, most pupils give simple instructions to an electronic toy in order to move it along a path to specific shapes successfully. Across the phase, most pupils use their skills confidently in the areas of learning, for example when using software to record an experiment with electricity and when creating an animated model of the earth orbiting the sun. In key stage 2, most pupils create multimedia presentations confidently in order to present their work by inserting pictures and video clips.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils enjoy the school's life and work, and feel safe within a supportive and inclusive learning community. Nearly all pupils show pride in their school and develop as confident and creative learners. Nearly all pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of drinking water, eating healthily and taking part in physical activity. This is reinforced effectively in a suitable range of physical activities, for example in swimming, dancing and cricket sessions. This contributes successfully towards developing most pupils' fitness and social skills.

Nearly all pupils behave well. They are polite towards each other and treat staff and visitors with respect. Nearly all pupils are caring towards each other and respect others in lessons and on the playground. Most pupils have a very good awareness of how to stay safe on the internet. They discuss the importance of not sharing passwords and the dangers of revealing personal information maturely. As a result, nearly all pupils are aware of the importance of making sensible decisions.

Most pupils contribute beneficially to their learning by suggesting ideas to be included in the termly themes. They express valid ideas about what to learn in order to develop their understanding further and play an active role in their learning. This contributes successfully to their enthusiasm towards work and their positive behaviour.

Members of the school council are willing to help their fellow pupils and support local charities and those further afield conscientiously. The council has suitable procedures for sharing and developing ideas and contributes appropriately to school life. However, pupils' role in contributing to issues that relate to improving aspects of the school's life and work is limited.

Most pupils' attitudes towards their own learning are sound. They show motivation in their work and apply themselves diligently to their tasks. Most pupils work enthusiastically and show that they are not afraid to take risks and make mistakes. This contributes successfully towards developing an effective and confident learning community.

Through the school's exciting curriculum, most pupils have sound knowledge of sustainability and global citizenship, for example as the youngest pupils create a model of a castle from recycled materials, and pupils in key stage 2 discuss the effects of typhoon Jebi in Japan.

Nearly all pupils are aware of the importance of attending school and, as a result, the school's attendance percentage is very sound.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Teachers across the federation are adapting their schemes of work to respond to the requirements of the new curriculum. This is beginning to have an effect on pupils' work as they persevere and show resilience in their tasks. Effective co-operation that happens regularly between key stage 2 pupils within the federation to develop specific skills has contributed towards creating an ethos of a close-knit community of schools within the federation. This has had a positive effect on pupils' numeracy, ICT and social skills.

One of the strengths of teaching is the way in which teachers plan practical and creative experiences within a broad and balanced curriculum, which develops pupils' enthusiasm and curiosity. These rich experiences are often reinforced in the local area, for example as pupils from the foundation phase go around the village to look at the odd and even numbers on the houses. This concept is developed further in the outdoor area through a range of practical and challenging activities. The principles of the foundation phase have been embedded firmly and resources are used effectively to enrich teaching and learning. Teachers include pupils' ideas successfully when planning tasks in the learning areas. This ensures that pupils have good ownership of their learning.

The quality of teaching is sound. There is a productive working relationship between staff and pupils, which ensures that pupils are committed to their learning. Pupils are given valuable opportunities to develop their thinking skills regularly in a wide range of contexts, for example in literacy, mathematical, scientific and art activities. Teachers have adopted a number of robust strategies to promote the Welsh language to pupils, for example by listening to Welsh music, through folk dancing lessons and drama work. Staff model good spoken language and all of this has a positive effect on pupils' standards of oracy. In lessons, teachers' presentations are interesting and lessons have a lively pace. Teachers encourage pupils to think for themselves, persevere when facing difficulties, to try, and not to be afraid of making mistakes. A good example of this is when the youngest pupils experiment with different materials in order to build a home for the three little pigs. As a result, pupils develop to become independent, confident and ambitious learners. Teachers question skilfully and ensure that tasks respond appropriately to individuals' levels of challenge. However, where teaching is less effective, there is a tendency to over-direct activities, which limits pupils' ability to develop as independent learners.

On the whole, teachers provide appropriate oral and written feedback in order for pupils to know how well they are achieving. However, feedback does not always give enough guidance for pupils to understand how to improve their work. As a result, a few pupils do not have a sound enough understanding of the next steps in their learning.

The richness of the local area is used successfully as an interesting prompt to appreciate the area and learn about Welsh myths and legends within their locality, for example the legend of the 'Afanc' and the legend of Gelert. This expands pupils' knowledge of Wales and the local area successfully and increases their pride in their Welshness and culture.

Through theme work, pupils' literacy, numeracy, ICT and creative skills are developed very successfully. As a result, pupils apply these skills confidently in a wide range of activities. A notable example of this is the way in which teachers develop pupils' understanding of fractions when discussing the value of notes in a music lesson and when explaining friction in an art lesson. Provision for ICT is sound, and teachers are beginning to embed the expectations of the digital competence framework effectively across the areas of learning.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a welcoming and inclusive community that provides robust care, support and guidance for its pupils. The school's arrangements ensure that all pupils, including latecomers to the school, settle quickly and feel part of the school's effective learning community. This is a notable strength.

The school's provision for pupils with special needs is of a high standard and ensures that most pupils make good progress in their learning skills. Staff provide them with effective support, which helps them purposefully in literacy and numeracy activities. This contributes effectively to their attitudes to learning. Pupils' individual plans are of good quality and include specific improvement targets. Intervention programmes and additional off-site provision are purposeful and meet nearly all pupils' needs. These ensure that they receive the relevant level of support. An example of this is the good use that is made of the language unit's resource and the specialist unit, which develop pupils' literacy skills and promote positive behaviour very effectively. As a result, most pupils make sound progress from their starting points and contribute successfully to the caring and familial ethos that exists within the school.

The school has robust procedures for tracking pupils' progress, which measure their attainment against their improvement targets effectively. Teachers use the information from this process successfully in order to identify pupils who need additional support to develop their standards and wellbeing. This has a positive effect on pupils' work, and teachers ensure that their tasks challenge pupils to the best of their ability.

There is a clear and effective emphasis on developing pupils' values. This is reinforced successfully through activities that develop pupils' educational mindset regularly. This has a positive effect on pupils' emotional wellbeing across the school.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural attitudes are promoted successfully through the curriculum, regular acts of collective worship and the creative arts.

The school has a good relationship with parents. The school is active in striving to raise the status of the Welsh language at home, as well as at school. This ensures that parents are engaged in their children's education as they support them to develop as bilingual learners.

The school's curriculum ensures purposeful opportunities for pupils to gain an increasing understanding of the importance of sustainability. An example of this is the unit of work that explains the importance of protecting the oceans from plastic waste. The school plans activities to raise money for local and national charities. This increases pupils' understanding of the importance of their individual contributions towards creating a caring society successfully.

Teachers plan beneficial activities to develop pupils' awareness of Welsh history and heritage. By studying local history and visiting nearby castles, most pupils have a good understanding of the history of the local area and Welsh culture. By taking part in local and national eisteddfodau, most pupils are given valuable opportunities to take part in the creative arts regularly.

The school works successfully with external agencies, such as social services and the police. This has a positive effect on pupils' ability to stay safe. For example, they understand that they have a duty to reduce any risks in their lives, such as staying safe when crossing the road and the dangers that exist online.

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

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

Leaders have a clear vision that is based on ensuring that all pupils develop to their full potential in a happy, safe and stimulating learning environment. This is done by introducing all pupils to their Welsh heritage and developing them as full members of society. The vision for the federation is shared effectively with pupils, staff and members of the governing body. A positive feature is that each individual school has kept its own unique ethos.

Staff have begun to support the headteacher by taking responsibility for developing elements of the school's life and work effectively. For example, arrangements and provision for pupils with special educational needs are now consistent across the schools in the federation. This has a positive effect on raising relevant pupils' standards. Foundation phase staff also come together to plan activities jointly in order to share good practice and ensure consistency in provision successfully. However, although the federation has existed for three years, these practices have not yet been established in full.

All members of staff have a sound understanding of their roles within their individual schools. However, there is no rigorous or agreed understanding about leaders' roles and teaching and learning responsibilities across the federation. This means that duties are not distributed fairly and lines of accountability are not robust enough. As a result, the current leadership and staffing structure is not sustainable enough to have a full effect on maintaining and improving provision and raising standards further.

The headteacher provides useful opportunities for all staff to report on strengths and areas that need to be strengthened within the school. On the whole, this is an effective tool for identifying the need for improvement across the federation. For example, when analysing staff's comments, the need to ensure consistency in pupils' ICT experiences was identified. Leaders arranged for all pupils in key stage 2 to visit Ysgol Betws-y-coed every week for ICT lessons. As a result, pupils' standards have increased across the federation.

However, the range of regular monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance activities is limited. As a result, processes are not always robust enough to address areas for improvement successfully, for example developing the standard of pupils' Welsh writing across the school.

Leaders promote the professional development of all staff at the school effectively. They provide staff with regular training, which has a beneficial effect on provision and pupils' standards. For example, training on how to promote pupils' thinking skills in English has led to increasing pupils' confidence and standards of oracy, in addition to their thinking skills. Training is often linked to whole-school priorities.

Since being established as one unified body, the governors have been very supportive of the federation and have a good grasp of pupils' standards and achievement and the schools' financial situation. They visit the schools regularly and receive useful information from the headteacher about the federation's life and work, which reinforces their knowledge and understanding well. They recognise the benefits of being in a federation and make decisions for the three schools, for example as they address the challenging financial situation. They see the potential of sharing staff expertise across the federation in the future. However, governors have not yet published an annual report for parents.

Leaders manage the school's resources effectively, and decisions about expenditure are included appropriately in targets for improvement. On the whole, leaders provide good quality resources that meet pupils' needs sensibly. Leaders manage the outdoor areas in the foundation phase effectively to improve pupils' learning experiences successfully. The school uses the pupil development grant effectively in order to provide additional support to work with vulnerable learners. This has a positive effect on ensuring that nearly all of these pupils achieve well.

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 (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' 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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