



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

A report on

**Ysgol Y Mynydd Du
School Road
Talgarth
Powys
LD3 0DQ**

Date of inspection: February 2020

by

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

About Ysgol Y Mynydd Du

Ysgol y Mynydd Du is in the town of Talgarth in Powys. The school opened in September 2017 as a result of the amalgamation of Bronllys and Talgarth primary schools. The school has 104 pupils between the ages of 4 and 11. There are three full-time and five part-time teachers at the school and four mixed-age classes.

The average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals over the last two years is around 9%, which is lower than the national average of 18%. Nearly all pupils are from a white British background. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language. The school has identified around 16% of its pupils as having special educational needs, which is below the national average of 21%.

The acting headteacher took up her post in September 2019. This is the school's first inspection.

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 quality of the care, support and guidance provided by the staff has a positive effect on pupils' standards and wellbeing and nearly all, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well.

The acting headteacher leads the school effectively and engages successfully with all staff to create a common ethos that places pupils' interests at the centre of their work. She receives very good support from members of staff and governors.

Staff work effectively as a team and have a successful working relationship with pupils. They provide them with a purposeful learning environment and interesting lessons and activities. As a result, nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school, they feel valued and like to take part in the range of activities offered to them. They are proud of their school and their work, and most have positive attitudes to learning.

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 Ensure that pupils apply their writing skills to the same standard in all areas of learning
- R2 Improve pupils' handwriting and presentation of work
- R3 Ensure consistency in the development of numeracy skills across all classes

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

During their time at the school, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well. They develop as conscientious and confident learners.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. By Year 2, they talk confidently about their work and experiences, for example when discussing how to make a healthy fruit salad. Most pupils in key stage 2 communicate clearly and confidently. They listen attentively when others are speaking and contribute thoughtfully to discussions, offering mature opinions.

Most pupils in the foundation phase make good progress when learning to read. They use their knowledge of letter sounds to identify new words successfully. By Year 2, many read fluently and discuss their favourite books and characters with increasing confidence and understanding. In key stage 2 most pupils talk about reading for pleasure and how it supports their learning. They apply their reading skills appropriately to gather relevant information by skimming and scanning, for example, when researching how the Egyptians make death masks.

In the reception class, most pupils develop their fine motor skills well through a wide range of activities such as fun exercises with modelling dough. By Year 2, many develop their writing skills in a range of genres. For example, they write an interesting adventure story about a fox explorer. Many pupils spell frequently occurring words successfully and use full stops correctly. As they move through key stage 2, many show a good understanding of writing styles and give suitable consideration to different audiences. Throughout the stage, most pupils learn to plan and redraft their work effectively to improve the quality of vocabulary and descriptive language. In Years 5 and 6, most pupils write moving accounts of Gelert and the Wolf, using mature, imaginative language. In all year groups, although most pupils use their writing skills regularly in other subjects, many do not always write to the same standard as in English as a subject. The quality of handwriting and presentation of work in many pupils' books is untidy and lacks care.

As pupils move through the school, many make good progress in developing their Welsh oral skills. Most respond to instructions appropriately and have a good understanding of Welsh used by teachers in Welsh lessons. By Year 6, most pupils' writing skills are developing well. Their reading skills and understanding of what they have read are at an early stage of development.

Most pupils' mathematical skills are developing well across the school. By Year 2, most handle money correctly and develop a good understanding of measurement, time and data handling. They develop their numeracy skills successfully across areas of learning in a purposeful and practical way, for example when measuring the length of their arms and legs whilst learning how muscles work. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils have a comprehensive understanding of number strategies. They apply their skills effectively to solve challenging problems, for example when

planning a purpose-built bungalow with specific layout instructions. They work out costings including value added tax accurately. However, the development of numeracy skills across the school is inconsistent.

Most pupils across the school make effective use of their information and communication technology (ICT) skills to support their learning across the curriculum. By the end of the foundation phase, most pupils confidently input data to spreadsheets, and produce a variety of charts and graphs. By Year 3, most use simple databases appropriately to record information about their topic work, such as descriptions of Greek Goddesses. Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 build well on this firm foundation. They regularly use video and animation apps to record and discuss their work, for example about mythological creatures. By Year 6, most pupils' ICT skills are very good. They are confident at writing algorithms and debugging codes, for example by programming a robot through a maze. They log on independently to their personal accounts and make good use of the range of resources available to support them at school and at home. They produce interesting presentations, which include video and sound clips, to educate other pupils about topics such as e-safety.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils are proud of their school and of their achievements. They enjoy coming to school and feel confident in the school environment. The warmth and strength of the working relationships between pupils and staff mean that they feel safe in school and know what to do if they are worried or anxious. Nearly all pupils feel well supported and valued. This encourages them to participate in a wide range of activities both during and after school.

Nearly all pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and well mannered, greet others and demonstrate a caring nature towards their peers. They show respect for adults and for one another, listen carefully to what their friends and teachers say and respond to their ideas considerately. During lessons, the mutual respect and concern they show each other contribute effectively to creating a positive learning environment.

Most pupils settle quickly in lessons and move between tasks sensibly and efficiently. They concentrate well in class and persevere when they find work hard. They have developed positive attitudes towards their learning, respond well to challenging tasks and as a result have a more resilient approach to their work.

Most pupils across the school enjoy the topics they study and work successfully in groups, pairs and as individuals. They are increasingly involved in assessing their own learning which helps them to understand what they need to do to improve.

Most pupils take their responsibilities seriously and are very appreciative of the opportunities they receive to influence the school's work. Members of various committees are hard-working and enthusiastic. They are proud of their involvement in deciding the school's values and the positive impact these have had on pupil behaviour and self-esteem. For example, the Super Ambassadors value of the month reward scheme' has encouraged successfully many pupils to develop qualities such as confidence, respect and tolerance, and a willingness to give new things a go. The eco-councillors are active members of the school community. They are proud of

their actions which have impacted positively on the environment. For example, by stopping the purchase of plastic milk bottles and straws and substituting these for more sustainable options.

Nearly all pupils know how to keep safe. Most have a good understanding of e-safety, and pupils in key stage 2 speak confidently about the need to protect their identity and of the dangers of contacting people on line.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily and keeping fit. Members of the school council successfully promote the fruit tuck shop at break times to encourage pupils to eat fruit regularly. Most pupils say that they enjoy the Daily Mile run and describe how it helps them to become fitter.

Most pupils have responded positively to the school's focus on improving attendance, and they understand the importance of attending school regularly.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Adults and pupils across the school have effective working relationships that support a purposeful learning environment. Teachers prepare effective lessons and activities for pupils that encourage them to take an interest in their work. They explain new ideas carefully to them and extend pupils' learning successfully through practical experiences. They ask probing questions to broaden pupils' understanding and to encourage them to use their thinking skills.

Teachers and assistants give pupils useful oral feedback and question them effectively to explore their understanding. This encourages pupils to reflect on their learning and evaluate their efforts regularly. As pupils move through the school, they have increasing opportunities to assess their own work and that of others. This develops their understanding of how to be successful in their work and helps them to know what they need to do to improve. However, teachers do not ensure that pupils apply their writing skills to a consistently high enough standard in all areas of learning and that handwriting and presentation of work is sufficiently neat and tidy.

Staff have established firmly the principles of the foundation phase. Staff nurture pupils' independence and develop their communication, numeracy and ICT skills well. Regular access to the outdoor area ensures that all pupils benefit from stimulating activities indoors and outdoors. For example, effective focused tasks associated with the topic 'my healthy body and me' provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to investigate and take an active part in their learning.

In key stage 2, the curriculum is broad and balanced. Teachers plan creatively to build systematically on the skills that pupils develop in the foundation phase. They set out interesting and imaginative learning experiences for pupils, such as through an engaging topic about space. They give pupils purposeful opportunities to offer suggestions and ideas about what they would like to study at the beginning of each topic. This engages pupils' interest and curiosity and strengthens their commitment to their work.

Teachers identify many worthwhile opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and ICT skills to support and extend their work across the curriculum. They use a variety

of numeracy and literacy intervention strategies effectively in order to target individuals and groups of pupils. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum are not consistent across all classes.

Teachers are beginning to plan effectively for the development of pupils' oral, reading and writing skills. Designated Welsh lessons are successful in engaging their interest and in fostering positive attitudes towards the language. The school promotes pupils' understanding of Welsh culture and traditions effectively, for example by celebrating the life of St David, taking part in the school eisteddfod and visiting the Urdd residential camp in Llangrannog.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school provides pupils with good quality care, support and guidance that has a very positive effect on their standards and wellbeing. All staff focus well on promoting high expectations and values that encourage pupils to take responsibility for their actions. As a result, the school is a happy, caring and inclusive community that has a strong level of respect, trust and co-operation between pupils, staff and parents.

There are effective procedures for tracking pupils' progress and teachers make good use of assessment information to identify pupils' needs at an early stage. This helps them to support pupils with additional learning, emotional or behavioural needs, and more able pupils, well. The school works closely with parents to help ensure they have a good understanding of how well their child is doing. The school works effectively with external agencies to support these pupils, particularly in dealing with challenging behaviour. Learning support assistants deliver a range of structured intervention programmes which is very successfully in improving pupils' spelling and reading skills. As a result, nearly all identified pupils make good progress from their individual starting points.

There are valuable opportunities for pupils to influence the work and life of the school through various pupil groups such as the school council, eco council, super ambassadors and the Criw Cymraeg. They have set up the 'Friends Foundation' to develop links with the community. These activities have a positive effect on pupils' confidence and nurture a sense of pride in their school.

Through lessons and regular assemblies staff provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to celebrate diversity and develop their spiritual, moral and social understanding. The school's effective personal and social education programme helps to promote and encourage values such as honesty and fairness and develop resilience and tolerance amongst pupils. Staff encourage pupils to be responsible citizens and develop empathy towards others, through looking after the environment or raising funds for local and national charities, for example. This has a positive effect on their awareness of the needs of others in their community and the wider world. As a result, many pupils have a good understanding of how their collective actions contribute to the wider benefit of the community.

The school provides a broad range of after school clubs, which develops pupils' sporting and social experiences well. These include activities such as football, gardening, coding, science, wellbeing and Welsh. Beneficial partnerships with other schools within the local cluster and local authority ensures a smooth transition for pupils to their chosen secondary school at the end of Year 6.

Educational visits to places such as Bronllys Castle and Craig y Nos country park provide valuable opportunities to enrich pupils' learning. Year 5 and 6 pupils attend Llangrannog outdoor centre where they take part in a range of physical and fun activities. The school also provides pupils with worthwhile opportunities to perform in concerts and church services and to compete in the school eisteddfod.

The school has suitable arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Teachers provide pupils with worthwhile opportunities to learn about making healthy lifestyle choices. For example, this term's topic in the foundation phase, 'my healthy body and me' develop pupils understanding of the importance of exercise and how it strengthens muscles and increases the heartbeat. Through visits from the local police older pupils in key stage 2, learn about the dangers of substance abuse, peer pressure and the importance of making positive choices.

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

Leadership and management: Good

The acting headteacher provides highly caring and supportive leadership, and a clear strategic vision for the school. This helps to ensure high standards of pupil wellbeing and achievement. She conveys the vision successfully to staff, pupils, parents and governors. The school is an orderly community with clear structures and policies that leaders and other staff implement consistently and effectively. This contributes significantly to the family ethos of co-operation across the school. As a result, the school is an effective learning community that succeeds in achieving its mission statement, 'together we learn and grow.'

Leaders and staff have worked together successfully to establish a new school with all members of staff demonstrating a strong commitment to promoting continuous and sustainable improvements. This is particularly evident in the strong focus that exists on encouraging learners to attain good standards in literacy, numeracy, ICT and wellbeing.

The school's performance management system is sound and contributes well to the professional development of all staff. This process links effectively to the school's improvement priorities and is having a positive effect on improving standards. A good example is the way that staff have improved outcomes for more able pupils, particularly in mathematics. There are valuable opportunities for all members of staff to share experiences and good practice with colleagues both within the school and with staff in other schools, such as developing pupils' independent learning skills, improving outcomes for more able pupils and instilling a more positive attitude of boys to learning

Governors are very supportive of the school and are well-informed about its performance. The majority of governors visit the school regularly and a few carry out a purposeful range of activities such as learning walks. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They use this information effectively to challenge the school about its performance.

All members of staff have a clear understanding of the school's strengths. They work together closely and meet regularly to discuss and plan jointly. A culture of continuous evaluation, which focuses in detail on pupils' outcomes, is embedded in the school's everyday life. There are robust systems to review progress, identify areas for improvement and take effective steps to implement them. These include scrutinising books and schemes of work, regular lesson observations, a careful analysis of the school's performance data and internal assessment arrangements. As a result, leaders and staff know their school very well and address improvements quickly and successfully. All teachers and staff play an active part in the process of monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement. Progress in pupils' attainment from their starting points is clear evidence of this. Leaders ensure that the current priorities are at the heart of further development of the school and are given careful attention. The school is successful, for example, in training staff and pupils as peer mediators to develop a therapeutic approach to help and support pupils with their emotional and social wellbeing.

The clear staffing structure identifies specific staff responsibilities and, as a result, all members of staff have clear understanding of their role within the school. Leaders have created a learning culture and supportive ethos across the new school. The school has an expansive and pleasant building, and a very good range of learning resources that promote pupils' achievement and wellbeing successfully. Leaders link expenditure appropriately to priorities for improvement and use the pupil development grant effectively to maintain support for specific pupils. As a result, these pupils make good progress over time.

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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