



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

A report on

Ysgol Pontrobert

**Meifod
Powys
SY22 6JN**

Date of inspection: June 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Pontrobert

Name of provider	Ysgol Pontrobert
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	54
Pupils of statutory school age	40
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	The school does not have a nursery class
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 23.0%)</i>	0.0%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 16.1%)</i>	
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	97.5%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2012
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	08/12/2014
Start date of inspection	26/06/2023
Ysgol Pontrobert has recently expanded significantly in terms of pupil numbers. The local authority has invested in building work at the school, which now includes three classes.	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different from those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Ysgol Pontrobert is a happy, homely and extremely hardworking place where the whole school community works together successfully and pupils make sound progress. The headteacher, members of the governing body and all staff work together closely and effectively to improve provision for the benefit of pupils. The school focuses successfully on promoting pupils' awareness of their local area, its history and traditions. Pupils demonstrate pride in their heritage and enjoy learning about famous people from the area and place them in a wider context.

Pupils' oral skills are a strength and their reading and writing skills develop very well. A strong culture of promoting oral skills has been embedded firmly in the school and pupils express themselves confidently and with a good level of accuracy. Many pupils write to a high standard and, by the top of the school, they create various genres very maturely. Their numeracy skills are sound and they use digital equipment and software effectively to support their work.

All older pupils are members of different pupil groups, which supports their peers to understand the importance of using the Welsh language and support them to gain confidence in using digital equipment. This creates a strong sense of belonging.

There is a very supportive working relationship between adults and pupils and this builds pupils' confidence successfully. Their behaviour is excellent and they demonstrate exceptionally positive attitudes towards their learning. They are eager to do their best and persevere when tasks challenge them.

An excellent feature of the school's work is the way in which teachers develop opportunities for pupils to select various activities that nurture their independence successfully. This work is a means for pupils to develop their skills and suggest how they would like to interpret the tasks. As a result, many pupils develop as skilful and independent individuals.

The school provides an effective range of support to support pupils' well-being and supports their learning needs successfully.

Recommendations

- R1 Provide timely opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback to develop their work further.

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to developing a curriculum that encourages pupils' independence and engagement, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Learning

On entry to the school, most pupils' skills are around the level expected for their stage of development, except their Welsh language skills, which are not as developed. Nearly all pupils make strong progress during their time at the school, particularly in Welsh. They develop as skilful Welsh speakers quickly and use the language wholly naturally with their peers and pupils of other ages. The youngest pupils develop strong physical skills and fine motor skills through a range of experiences in the different learning areas, both indoors and outdoors.

Pupils' oral skills are a strength across the school. They speak confidently and correctly. For example, many pupils in the reception and Year 1 class explain the importance of avoiding too many fatty foods as they are not as healthy as fresh fruit and vegetables. Many pupils speak naturally and use elements of the area's dialect while conversing. The area's accent can also be heard in their speech. They express themselves confidently in Welsh and English. They respond successfully to rich opportunities to express an opinion and present their ideas, for example when sharing the highlights of the year with the rest of the class in Years 4, 5 and 6.

Most pupils read eagerly and discuss their books enthusiastically. A strong culture of satisfaction in reading is embedded in the school. For example, in Years 2 and 3, most pupils read for a purpose and show a sound understanding of meaning. As part of their work on the six areas of learning, pupils gather information to create a fact file about the harpist Nansi Richards, Telynores Maldwyn, to coincide with the visit of the Cerdd Dant festival to the area. Most of the older pupils read challenging texts confidently in both languages. They discuss their books maturely for their age and use higher-order reading skills to understand the wider meaning of the text. They gain a great deal of satisfaction from their books and enjoy giving presentations about their current favourite book. This develops the awareness of the rest of the class of the latest material and of books that may also appeal to them.

Many pupils in the reception and Year 1 class write with increasing confidence in different contexts. They include simple punctuation and usually spell familiar words correctly. Many pupils in Years 2 and 3 demonstrate a vivid imagination when writing the diary of Owain Glyndŵr following a visit to the parliament in Machynlleth. Many of the older pupils write to a high standard in Welsh and English. For example, they use their background knowledge of Lady Macbeth's soliloquy in Shakespeare's play to

create their own soliloquy, which demonstrates a strong awareness of how to use effects such as rhetorical questions to enrich the text.

Most pupils' numeracy skills are sound across the school. They apply their number skills, awareness of shape and data-handling skills confidently and with increasing independence in different rich contexts. For example, in the reception and Year 1 class, pupils use a Venn diagram to classify different foods successfully. Across the school, most pupils apply their numeracy skills successfully. For example, in Year 2 and 3, many pupils evaluate the profit made from selling produce at the Christmas fayre. Older pupils compare the population data of the British nations during the Great War and consider what percentage of the population joined the army. They create detailed line graphs to represent the rainfall and temperature in Pontrobert during January.

Nearly all pupils use an increasing range of digital equipment and software confidently in different contexts to support their learning. They apply their digital skills effectively to respond to different tasks. For example, the oldest pupils use spreadsheets in detail and correctly to investigate which materials absorb water best. They create their own websites that present useful information about plants. Then, pupils in the younger classes use the information on the websites to create their own digital booklets. This highlights purposeful use of technology and successful co-operation.

Most pupils respond effectively when developing their creative skills successfully. They create colourful and detailed original pictures and emulate the work of Welsh and international artists skilfully. They compose dances in various genres. For example, pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 create dance movements from different periods in history.

Pupils sing tunefully together in whole-school assemblies and demonstrate a very good understanding of pitch and rhythm. All pupils from Year 3 up to Year 6 learn to play brass instruments and the school band competes successfully at a national level.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils feel safe at school and express clearly that adults treat them fairly and with respect. This supports their well-being successfully. Pupils have positive attitudes to all aspects of school life and delight in discussing their work with visitors. Nearly all pupils listen attentively to presentations and express an opinion confidently, giving reasons for their views. Older pupils discuss current affairs purposefully and appreciate different views, for example when discussing events and the news of the day.

From the outset, most pupils develop sound physical skills and enjoy working outdoors. They respond enthusiastically to opportunities to develop skills in different sports in physical education lessons and during break times. Regular opportunities to play in Parc Eifion, on the school grounds, promotes their well-being highly effectively. Many pupils enjoy taking part in extra-curricular activities and representing the school in competitions as individuals and in teams both locally and

regionally. Nearly all pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily and the importance of a balanced diet for their health.

Pupils develop an awareness of the importance of sustainability, for example by holding a no electricity day and a clothing and book exchange so that they can be re-used. They have a good awareness of aspects such as global warming and its effect on creatures around the world. In response, they have adopted a polar bear and the school contributes towards the cost of caring for it.

An excellent feature of the school's work is pupils' awareness of the importance of supporting their own well-being and caring kindly for their friends. Across the school, pupils are aware of the importance of taking care of their emotional well-being and benefit from valuable opportunities to discuss their feelings. For example, during circle time in the reception and Year 1 class, they send a smile to the next child to make sure that everyone is happy. Most pupils develop emotional resilience through opportunities to discuss their feelings and this develops their confidence and self-image successfully. They respond positively to opportunities to discuss their feelings, for example by discussing how to cope when they sometimes feel angry.

Across the school, pupils show excellent attitudes towards their learning. They work together successfully and are keen to complete tasks that challenge them to develop their skills. They persevere particularly effectively, even when something is a real challenge for them. From an early age, they work closely with other pupils and share ideas to reach the goal. For example, in Years 2 and 3, many work together successfully when developing a creative dance that interprets how flowers are pollinated by bees.

Pupils are proud of their community, its traditions and its culture. For example, they compete successfully in local and national eisteddfodau and attain high standards. They embrace the culture and history of Wales and enjoy learning about their local heritage. For example, they speak with pride about the hymnist, Ann Griffiths, whose home was not far from Pontrobert.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They consider the feelings of other children and the adults who care for them. They are polite and convivial with visitors and enjoy sharing ideas about what they learn.

All pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 represent their fellow pupils as members of one of the various 'pupil's voice' groups that are active in the school. This increases their confidence and develops their communication skills successfully. Members of the groups speak confidently about what they achieve. For example, as a result of fundraising activities, a decision was made to donate to charity and invest a share in ordering a fish tank to be placed in the school foyer for all pupils to enjoy. Members of the groups take their roles seriously and make a valuable contribution to school life. For example, the digital wizards provide parents and carers with up-to-date information about the importance of keeping pupils safe while working and playing online.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school provides an innovative curriculum and a range of exciting experiences that support the principles of the Curriculum for Wales successfully. Teachers and pupils work together to ensure exciting contexts that focus in detail on local, national and international aspects. Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to guide the direction of their learning. For example, in Years 2 and 3, pupils decided that it would be interesting to learn about the history of the famous Welshman, David Davies, Llandinam, as they had an interest in learning about the history of the Welsh coalmines. Teachers facilitate learning masterfully to encourage pupils' independence. They provide opportunities for them to work individually, in pairs and groups, and use teachers' specialisms expertly to deliver elements of the curriculum. Staff encourage pupils to challenge themselves while developing co-operation skills, perseverance and resilience. Pupils understand that making mistakes is part of the process of improving their work and make sound progress.

Staff ensure a strong Welsh ethos by setting high expectations for pupils to use the language continuously. They are given rich opportunities to speak Welsh and nearly all develop as confident bilingual pupils and show an infectious enthusiasm towards the language. A strong culture of reading permeates the whole school and pupils take advantage effectively of numerous opportunities to discuss books, gather facts and read in the '*Den Darllen*' ('Reading Den'). There is a wealth of early reading activities in the reception and Year 1 class and, by the top of the school, pupils question each other about books and discuss whether a particular text is suitable for their peers. Rich reading material in Welsh and English contributes effectively to opportunities for pupils to create high quality written work.

Staff use the attractive learning areas around the school purposefully to promote creative and practical learning. Pupils are encouraged to work independently and constructively in all classes. All members of staff have a highly positive working relationship with pupils, based on respect and courtesy. Teachers encourage discussions about hot topics, such as destroying animal habitats and the war in Ukraine, and show that they value pupils' contributions greatly.

Staff's probing questioning helps pupils to recall previous learning successfully and confirms their understanding of tasks. They use a range of effective questions that lead pupils to respond at length and reflect on their learning. They also provide regular opportunities for pupils to make choices about their learning. For example, Year 4 and 5 pupils make an intelligent choice about whether they would like to create a diary or a letter from the perspective of a character in a novel.

Support staff reinforce the school's objectives skilfully when supporting pupils with their work. They use a range of purposeful strategies to promote pupils' progress and well-being.

Teachers plan appropriate educational trips and valuable residential visits to reinforce learning. Visiting places of local importance, such as Dolwar Fach, the home of the hymnist Ann Griffiths, improves pupils' understanding of their local area or *cynefin*. The trip to Yr Ysgwrn, the home of Hedd Wyn, succeeded in deepening learning when discussing the First World War. The school also invites visitors to promote and enrich pupils' creative and physical skills.

Teachers track pupils' progress in detail by using a wealth of information intelligently when assessing work. They provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to read their work aloud and give them constructive verbal feedback on how to develop the work further. Teachers and pupils create agreed success criteria and the older pupils produce their own criteria confidently and use them to check their progress. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers. As a result, most pupils engage with their learning for extended periods and develop a useful understanding of learning how to learn. Teachers respond appropriately to pupils' work in books and provide useful comments for improvement. However, pupils are not given timely enough opportunities to respond to feedback to build on their good work and improve it further.

Teachers share information regularly with parents and carers about their children's progress and well-being, which helps them understand how to support them at home. Annual reports for parents report clearly on pupils' progress and the areas they need to develop.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a happy, welcoming and lively community that promotes well-being, equal opportunities and good behaviour for all pupils. There is a wonderful working relationship between staff and pupils, which focuses on ensuring that all pupils feel safe and enjoy all of their learning experiences. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are commendable and this permeates all aspects of school life. Staff have high expectations in terms of pupils' behaviour and nurture their independence effectively from an early age. Robust procedures have been established to ensure good levels of attendance.

Pupils are given regular opportunities to undertake leadership roles and shoulder responsibilities. As a result, they take their responsibilities seriously and fulfil their roles with pride and dedication. For example, the Criw Cymraeg encourages parents to record video clips of themselves singing well-known Welsh songs and shares the finished work with the school community. This raises the awareness of pupils and their families of the importance of enjoying contemporary Welsh culture outside the school grounds.

There are exciting experiences for pupils to take part in local performances and events. For example, they entertain guests at a local garden fete and perform at Gregynog Music Festival and the Cerdd Dant festival. These experiences are effective in developing their creative skills and their confidence to perform publicly.

The school's provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is sound. Nearly all pupils with ALN make good progress in comparison to their starting points. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) is extremely dedicated and fulfils her responsibilities skilfully. Through her astute guidance, staff gather useful information about pupils' progress and well-being and analyse this information purposefully. As a result, they identify pupils who need additional support at an early stage and provide a range of purposeful support programmes that target their needs successfully. These programmes include support to develop literacy skills, in addition to supporting pupils' emotional well-being. The school works closely with parents and carers, for example when reviewing pupils' progress and identifying what support

they will need to reach the next steps in their learning. An effective feature of provision is the relationship between the school and the Cylch Meithrin, which is located on the school grounds. This enables them to share important information about pupils' interests and needs before they reach the school. This supports staff to put arrangements in place and prepare to meet pupils' needs in a timely manner.

Periods of collective worship provide an opportunity for pupils to reflect on their own rights and those of others. For example, they develop an understanding of important values and sensitive issues relating to conservation as they discuss how illegal hunting has an effect on the number of rhinos who live in the wild.

A wide range of rich experiences promote pupils' cultural development and celebrate their Welsh heritage and culture successfully. For example, they learn about the names of houses in the village of Pontrobert and who lived there at different periods in history. As a result, nearly all pupils have a strong sense of belonging to their community. Teachers also provide opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures and appreciate their traditions and culture.

The school promotes pupils' awareness of the importance of healthy eating and drinking appropriately. For example, the oldest pupils complete research to discover the most suitable foods for footballers who are competing in the World Cup. As a result, they have a good understanding of how their choices in terms of diet can affect their health. A range of purposeful opportunities are provided to develop pupils' fitness and physical skills through the after-school sports club and taking part in various competitions, such as football and hockey.

A robust culture of safeguarding has been embedded effectively at the school. Leaders ensure that all members of staff receive appropriate training. The governing body updates procedures regularly and works closely with leaders and staff.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which is based on ensuring the progress and highest possible standards of well-being for all pupils. She has shared this vision successfully with staff, governors, pupils and parents. The headteacher has very high expectations of herself and others and this creates an environment where everyone is ambitious and aspires for the best. Leaders are completely committed to providing a curriculum that motivates, excites and engages the interest of all pupils in full. As a result, a sense of purpose and excitement is a natural part of the school's work. Leaders promote a culture of safeguarding highly effectively and, as a result, pupils feel safe at the school during their work and play and enjoy their time at the school.

The headteacher is supported effectively by skilful, dedicated and energetic staff. They fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and purposefully. There are suitable arrangements for managing staff performance and their targets link clearly to the school's priorities. There is a clear link between these targets and the staff's professional learning activities. For example, the ALNCo has provided valuable training to promote staff's awareness of using emotional well-being support programmes with pupils. Staff work effectively with each other and local schools in

sharing innovative practices that promote the development of the Curriculum for Wales successfully.

Leaders have established robust arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the school's work, which include a wide range of stakeholders such as staff, governors and pupils. They gather a wide range of first-hand evidence and analyse this evidence carefully. As a result, leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Leaders identify appropriate priorities that give due attention to these issues and align successfully with national priorities, for example in developing an approach to the Curriculum for Wales and reducing the effects of poverty on pupils' attainment. Leaders monitor progress against priorities regularly, respond to specific milestones and evaluate the influence of expenditure.

Members of the governing body are tireless advocates of the school and have a sound understanding of the school's work and its community. They play a purposeful role in the school's improvement procedures by visiting regularly and undertaking valuable monitoring activities. For example, they scrutinise the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils. Leaders provide the governing body with comprehensive information about the school's performance. As a result, governors have a sound grasp of the school's strengths and a clear vision of where developments need to be made for the future. Governors ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders manage resources appropriately. They ensure that the school has enough staff to respond to the recent increase in pupil numbers. They monitor expenditure carefully and link it appropriately to the school's priorities for improvement. Grants, for example the Pupil Development Grant, are used appropriately, , to provide appropriate programmes that support pupils to develop their reading skills and promote their well-being.

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/members of the management committee 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, middle leaders, and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work 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 lessons, including learning support groups and the specialist resource base (where appropriate), 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 (where appropriate) and in outdoor areas
- visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning (where appropriate)
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs
- 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' well-being, 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 (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales>)

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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