



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

A report on

Ysgol Mynydd Bychan

**New Zealand Road
Gabalfa
Cardiff
CF14 3BR**

Date of inspection: December 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol Mynydd Bychan

Name of provider	Ysgol Mynydd Bychan
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	237
Pupils of statutory school age	178
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	37
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 23.7%)</i>	4.6%
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 13.2%)</i>	3.0%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	8.9%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	3.4%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2007
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	30/11/2015
Start date of inspection	04/12/2023

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 Mynydd Bychan is a highly inclusive and supportive community which promotes a caring ethos successfully. There are close and warm working relationships between pupils and staff, which fosters an ethos of enthusiastic learning and a strong sense of belonging to the school's family.

Pupils enjoy learning and are very enthusiastic during lessons and tasks. They are keen to work with staff and each other and, as a result, to succeed as confident and ambitious learners. During their time at the school, most pupils develop purposeful literacy and digital competence skills and nearly all implement successful social skills.

Teachers plan the curriculum intelligently, which promotes very beneficial learning opportunities for pupils. Pupils' outcomes are good where teaching and feedback on their work is challenging and consistent. However, there are inconsistencies in provision in relation to developing pupils' numeracy skills and teachers' feedback to target the next steps in pupils' learning.

Staff support and care for pupils very consistently and conscientiously. This contributes to pupils' desire to learn and persevere with tasks. Staff encourage pupils successfully to take responsibility for their own well-being. Support to promote pupils' learning and well-being and their ability to use this support meaningfully is a strong feature of the school. As a result, their behaviour is excellent.

Staff use the accommodation productively to meet pupils' needs purposefully and teachers plan stimulating activities to promote learning. Provision of outdoor learning experiences is effective and focuses on improving pupils' skills through stimulating activities. Leaders keep in close contact with the wider school community and build on the very positive relationships with parents.

The headteacher leads the school very skilfully and inspires the staff to ensure that pupils' learning and well-being are regular priorities. This is central to her ambitious vision. She works diligently with staff and governors to ensure that the school is an inclusive learning community, which promotes positive and innovative opportunities for pupils.

Leaders evaluate the school's work wholly effectively and use regular, thorough and skilful self-evaluation processes. The school's monitoring activities lead to relevant improvement plans and comprehensive training opportunities for staff to develop their skills through agreed professional learning.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen the opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills more regularly across the curriculum

- R2 Ensure that the quality of feedback from teachers is consistent to target the next steps in pupils' learning effectively

What happens next

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

Main findings

Learning

A majority of pupils start school with basic skills that are equivalent to, or higher than, what is expected for their age and stage of development. During their time at the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make good progress in their learning. As a result, they develop their skills well and develop their knowledge and understanding effectively.

Most pupils listen attentively to adults and each other and respond enthusiastically to presentations. The youngest pupils' oral skills develop well. By Year 2, they develop the ability to converse independently, for example when measuring sound levels by using a data metre correctly. Most of the oldest pupils develop eloquent Welsh speaking skills and take pride in their use of the Welsh language. Most use English confidently with wide vocabulary and language patterns. As a result, they communicate successfully and purposefully in class discussions and express their views clearly and maturely.

Most pupils' reading skills develop soundly. The youngest pupils use an appropriate range of phonic strategies to read familiar and unfamiliar words correctly. By Year 2, they use their reading skills well and explain the content in detail. Most of the oldest pupils read meaningfully in various contexts. They vary their tone of voice and use punctuation correctly and intelligently. They also develop their higher-order reading skills purposefully to gather information from different sources, for example by researching the female and multicultural heroes of Wales.

Most pupils' early writing skills develop purposefully. By Year 2, many write in a wide range of contexts and for different audiences, such as creative stories about dragons and imaginary monsters. Most of the oldest pupils build firmly on their writing skills and show a sound grasp of paragraphing and figurative language in their extended writing. They adapt the style and structure to different texts well, for example when creating a first aid guide on how to respond to different emergency situations. As a result, pupils' extended writing skills build sensibly as they move through the school.

In the school's youngest years, most pupils make good progress in their mathematical development. In the reception class, most pupils have a good grasp of number facts up to 20 and, in Year 2, many calculate and bond numbers up to 100 confidently. They also succeed in describing the characteristics and properties of

three-dimensional shapes correctly by creating nets independently and discovering spheres and cylinders around the school. By the top of the school, most pupils develop their mathematical knowledge effectively. For example, they use formulae confidently to calculate the height of a skeleton based on the length of particular bones. However, although most pupils have a sound understanding of mathematical concepts, they do not apply their numeracy skills to the same standard regularly across the curriculum.

Most pupils develop effective digital skills. They log in confidently to digital platforms to access their work. Most Year 1 pupils program electronic robots confidently to follow specific paths. Year 2 pupils also make good use of educational software, for example when coding to create shapes and make animations. Most of the oldest pupils make wise choices about the most effective equipment and software to consider for different purposes. They use a range of programs to present information well. For example, they use a green screen to create advertisements for local businesses and create a database and spreadsheets to compare nurses' salaries around the world.

Most pupils develop their artistic skills well. The youngest pupils create art in a wide variety of contexts. For example, from the nursery class to Year 2, pupils work well together to draw and film the animals on the walls of Cardiff castle and create a statue of a man out of twigs. Across the school, most pupils take advantage of opportunities to develop their creativity. This includes the oldest pupils planning and building windmills and developing their expressive skills by creating backdrops before filming their plays.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils show pride in, and respect for, their school. They feel safe within the inclusive and familial ethos, which is a core element of the vision of the headteacher and staff. They implement the shared values, trust and vision effectively and, as a result, pupils know whom to approach if something is worrying them. Nearly all pupils appreciate that staff respect them. The successful relationships contribute firmly to developing an ethos of close co-operation which is based on the 'School Agreement', namely '*bydd barod, bydd ddiogel, bydd wych*' ('be ready, be safe, be brilliant').

Nearly all pupils are very polite and respectful while moving around the school. They behave excellently in classes, without the encouragement of staff, and are very caring towards each other. Nearly all pupils also have a sound awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe online. Pupils' attendance is good and higher than the national average.

Nearly all pupils take pride in the fact that staff listen to their views and consider them in decisions that affect them. Nearly all pupils, including those with ALN, are ready to assume leadership roles and responsibilities and play a full part in the school's life and work. Pupils who are members of various committees, such as the 'School Council', the 'Eco Council' and the 'Health and Well-being Group' make effective contributions to the school's day-to-day life. The 'Digital Leaders' also work with their peers and staff to support them to use various apps and digital platforms. The '*Criw Clên*' and '*Criw Cymru Cŵl*' also play social games and reward pupils who promote the Welsh language regularly on the school playground.

Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They listen well to teachers' instructions and concentrate conscientiously on their work in lessons. They are enthusiastic learners who devote themselves to new experiences eagerly. They also work diligently with their friends and adults and support each other voluntarily.

Nearly all pupils concentrate regularly for extended periods. They treat their work with respect, and resilience and motivation in what they learn. They work with their peers in pairs or groups to solve problems without the support of adults, for example when using the '*Llwybr Llwyddo*' method when thinking about how to improve their work. Most discuss their work confidently and are willing to listen to the views and ideas of others meaningfully. Most develop as independent learners.

Most pupils develop well as healthy and confident individuals and understand how to make appropriate choices in relation to diet and physical activity. For example, in Year 5, pupils undertake physical activities to measure the difference in their lung capacity. Most pupils also appreciate the importance of regular exercise and opportunities to eat healthily. They enjoy taking part in fitness lessons and activities to develop their physical skills, such as swimming and gymnastics sessions.

Most pupils take advantage of opportunities to work together in the school's well-being activities, such as the extra-curricular well-being group and lunchtime clubs. They also make purposeful use of the 'Quiet Corner' and 'Well-being Room', which promote their emotional well-being intelligently. As a result, most are aware of how to make wise decisions to look after their well-being.

Nearly all pupils develop a good understanding of the importance of moral citizenship through their awareness of the values that are promoted by the school. The oldest pupils are fully aware of the importance of equality and inclusion as part of their work on diversity and children's rights. Nearly all learn about values to support others successfully and are keen to raise money for local and national charities. This increases pupils' awareness of the importance of their contributions to creating a caring society.

Teaching and learning experiences

Teachers plan a variety of engaging experiences in line with the principles of Curriculum for Wales, which supports most pupils to make sound progress from their starting points. Teachers provide stimulating activities that promote pupils' interest effectively, for example about the local area when travelling on a double decker bus around Cardiff, when making a podcast about the history of the tsunami in the capital and when following the journey of the River Taff.

Teachers encourage pupils to share their opinions purposefully about what they would like to learn. They welcome pupils' ideas at the beginning of themes, and during them, very effectively. They listen carefully to pupils' views while planning thoroughly to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding in different contexts. They use their suggestions effectively when preparing activities, for example by providing engaging activities about the traditions of the Butetown carnival, reggae music and human rights in the United States. Pupils are keen to share their experiences with others about the local area, their city and beyond.

The curriculum gives careful consideration to the world's diversity and global events, such as drought and famine, while studying climate change. Teachers plan learning experiences that reflect the cultural heritage of Wales and Welshness successfully. All staff also promote the advantages of learning Welsh and encourage, support and insist that pupils communicate and respond in Welsh regularly.

On the whole, staff's teaching skills are very robust. In the most effective lessons, teachers challenge pupils to achieve to the best of their ability. Where expectations are high, the hustle and bustle of activities engage and hold pupils' interest successfully and motivates them to persevere and succeed. On the whole, introductions to learning activities are fast paced, which promotes pupils' enthusiasm and desire to apply themselves to their activities promptly.

The working relationship between staff and pupils is a strength across the school. Staff know the pupils very well and adapt learning activities effectively to respond to pupils' needs, including those who need support with their work. Assistants provide good support for pupils and know when to intervene and when to allow them to complete their work independently.

Pupils are given a range of purposeful experiences to develop their skills across the curriculum. For example, teachers in the nursery and reception classes provide good opportunities for pupils to follow instructions and use authentic ingredients to make cakes in the mud kitchen. As a result, pupils begin to discuss the difference in the volume of boxes and the weight of specific goods effectively while working together enthusiastically. Year 6 pupils also develop their writing skills successfully, for example when presenting an interesting political manifesto on how to operate on the school council. However, provision for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum is not consistent enough. As a result, the most effective use by pupils of their numeracy skills in real life situations varies across the school.

On the whole, teachers use assessment activities and good methods when responding to pupils' work. In the most effective practices, most teachers share oral feedback skilfully to challenge and assess the quality of pupils' learning and to target any needs promptly. Staff also question pupils well and provide appropriate opportunities for them to respond to teachers' feedback and written comments. However, all teachers' feedback does not identify the next steps in pupils' learning regularly enough to deepen their understanding of their work.

The school provides a beneficial and interesting learning environment where specific areas are used purposefully to support pupils' learning. Staff create attractive displays and learning areas inside the building to stimulate and provide opportunities for pupils to make choices about what and how to learn. Valuable opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding in practical situations, either indoors or outdoors. For example, staff use the climbing equipment, the planting areas and the outdoor stage intelligently to provide learning experiences for pupils to develop their physical and artistic skills.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a very caring and inclusive community where staff encourage pupils to contribute to its warm and friendly ethos. The close working relationship between

staff and pupils, and among the pupils themselves, is a positive feature of the school. For example, the diligent work of the oldest pupils, by using questionnaires to discover pupils' aspirations, has led to re-examining how the school raises pupils' awareness of their rights.

Teachers and assistants know the pupils exceptionally well and respond sensibly and promptly to their social and emotional needs. They contribute diligently to purposeful strategies to manage pupils' behaviour. This includes the beneficial use of nurture groups, which support individuals and groups of pupils effectively. The school's co-operative approaches make a valuable contribution to pupils' happiness and desire to participate in their daily activities. This support helps nearly all pupils to settle smoothly into school life.

Provision for pupils who have been identified as having ALN is very robust. The ALN co-ordinator works closely and cohesively with other members of staff, external partners and local schools. This ensures that individuals and groups of pupils are identified and supported well from an early age. Reviews of pupils' progress mean that members of staff have a clear understanding of pupils' needs. Staff interact beneficially with a range of services to ensure additional and timely resources to provide specialist support for pupils with a range of learning, physical, emotional and social needs. These arrangements, together with the specific support that is available in the 'Well-being Room' and the 'Quiet Corner', are very beneficial. As a result, most pupils who benefit from additional support make good progress in relation to their stage of development and their starting points.

The school develops very effective opportunities for pupils to contribute to decisions to improve their experiences. Staff encourage all pupils to undertake leadership roles effectively through a variety of elected groups. A good example is the work of the school 'Senedd' over recent years, which is innovative. This provision broadens pupils' understanding and develops them as active citizens who value the contributions of individuals to support and maintain a purposeful society. The school 'Senedd' has petitioned Welsh Government, calling on them to fund free leisure facilities for the nation's children, for example.

Staff provide a beneficial range of opportunities for pupils to develop a good understanding of their Welsh heritage. For example, they promote pupils' recognition of their *cynefin*, or local area, effectively by studying the history of Owain Glyndŵr and Welsh legends. The school promotes Welsh culture effectively, for example by holding eisteddfod ceremonies, writing a monologue about a child at the school in Tryweryn and the protests to establish a Welsh language television channel. These activities encourage pupils to engage enthusiastically with Welsh culture and feel proud of the school's inclusive ethos within its Welsh community.

Staff place an effective emphasis on providing a wide range of trips and visits that support the curriculum and engage pupils' interest in their learning. For example, the youngest pupils learn about the world of work effectively. This includes opportunities for them to study the lives of local artisans, such as a jeweller and artists. Pupils also plan to sell produce during business week to enrich their knowledge of profit and loss.

Staff enable pupils to make strong contributions to their community. They use experiences positively so that pupils develop respect and understand that caring for others is important. As a result, pupils learn that acts of kindness make a difference to the lives of families in their neighbourhood and beyond. The school uses collective worship sessions successfully to promote pupils' spiritual and moral development. For example, pupils support a local food bank by collecting donations in their classes to support the campaign of a nearby church. These activities contribute well to strengthening pupils' understanding that supporting each other is important in a caring society.

The school's processes for monitoring attendance and punctuality are efficient. Staff communicate well with each other and external agencies to support pupils and their families to improve pupils' attendance. Staff understand their roles well in safeguarding pupils and maintaining the school's inclusive ethos, such as dealing well with any cases of alleged bullying. The school's arrangements for safeguarding are good and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher places pupils' learning and well-being at the heart of her vision. She focuses on placing the school at the heart of its community and ensures that the pupil's voice is at the heart of this ambitious vision. Governors support her philosophy and staff act diligently on leaders' expectations.

The headteacher encourages staff to model firm and consistent behaviours and values. They are based directly on a caring ethos, which aims to benefit the school community and pupils' lives. She motivates pupils to embrace their happiness and play a purposeful part in the school's key decisions. As a result, all leaders ensure that an inclusive and caring atmosphere permeates the school.

Leaders create a very supportive ethos among all staff and pupils. As a result, staff and pupils take pride in the school motto, '*O'r fesen derwen a dyf*' ('Mighty oaks from little acorns grow'), and act sensibly to develop a harmonious mindset across the school. Their positive incentives create an ethos of enthusiastic cooperation, which has a purposeful effect on pupils' attitudes to learning.

Leaders allocate responsibilities effectively and the headteacher holds staff to account directly for the quality and effect of their work. Leaders' processes for evaluating the effectiveness of provision are rigorous and based on a wide range of valid and reliable evidence. The purposeful systems include scrutiny of pupils' books and analysing data about pupils' progress. This includes improving pupils' investigative skills through practical and authentic activities. Leaders also seek the views of other stakeholders well to inform their practices. For example, they consider parents' views and act on any findings intelligently, such as better communication through the use of social media platforms.

Regular evaluations and reviews by the headteacher and the governing body create a clear picture for leaders of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. There is a skilful link between self-evaluation activities and improvement planning. Leaders use their findings effectively and set purposeful targets to improve the school's

practices. Leaders share the school's culture of safeguarding thoroughly with all staff, which includes regular checks on the safety of the school's site.

Leaders keep in close contact with the wider school community. They build on the strong relationships with parents and work well together to improve the quality of the learning environment, such as on the '*Diwrnodau Gwneud Gwahaniaeth*' ('Making a Difference Days'). Governors ensure that pupils eat healthily and drink water regularly and advise parents on the importance of nutritious food in their lunch boxes.

Leaders and staff make the best use of the school grounds. For example, pupils use the adventure equipment effectively to master physical tasks, such as climbing and balancing. The outdoor provision for the youngest pupils is completely purposeful. This enriches their opportunities to develop their independent skills through a wide range of learning experiences.

Governors are knowledgeable and their positive and intelligent input creates purposeful opportunities across the school. They develop a sound understanding of the school's activities through learning walks and discussing pupils' work alongside teachers. They are very supportive of the headteacher and work purposefully with her and the staff by questioning the effect of their work as critical friends. The headteacher advises them realistically and honestly on how to improve provision. This includes the need to challenge pupils to improve their scientific skills and develop assessment activities further.

Governors monitor the budget carefully. They ensure that decisions on expenditure focus sensibly on the school's priorities for improvement, such as investments in digital equipment and reading resources. Leaders use the pupil development grant wisely to support residential trips and to implement specific interventions across the school by staff, which provide beneficial support for pupils to improve their learning.

Leaders ensure that staff have access to effective learning opportunities. These opportunities support their professional development and correspond to their individual needs. These link well with the school's improvement priorities and have a good effect on developing pupils' skills, such as their emotional well-being.

The school shares effective practices with local schools, which provides good opportunities for teachers to compare and share their experiences with other professionals. As a result, professional learning opportunities support the school's ability to improve successfully.

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:

Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website:

<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>

This document has been translated by Trosol (Welsh to English).