



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

A report on

**Ysgol Abercaseg
Bethesda
Gwynedd
LL57 3PL**

Date of inspection: February 2018

by

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

About Ysgol Abercaseg

Ysgol Abercaseg is situated in the town of Bethesda in Gwynedd. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work. There are 144 pupils between 3 and 7 years old on roll. Since January 2017, the school has federated with Ysgol Pen-y-bryn, which is in the same town.

The average proportion of pupils who have been eligible for free school meals over the last three years is 15%. This is lower than the national percentage of 19%. Sixty-three per cent (63%) of pupils speak Welsh at home and very few are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The school has identified slightly over 11% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, but very few have a statement of special educational needs. The percentage with additional learning needs is slightly lower than the national percentage of 21%.

The headteacher was appointed to the post in April 2016, and the school federated with Ysgol Pen-y-bryn in January 2017. The school was last inspected in February 2012.

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

Ysgol Abercaseg is a happy school where the pupil's voice is given a prominent place in the school's life and work. Pupils' ability to work independently and persevere with tasks is a strength throughout the school. Most pupils make very good progress from their starting points and achieve high standards. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and there is a sense of an industrious routine and respect throughout the school.

The standard of teaching is good and pupils are given wide-ranging opportunities to undertake challenging tasks that stimulate them and engage their interest. There is a strong relationship between all adults and pupils, and they give good consideration to all pupils' needs. Staff insist on accuracy of language, and this is reflected in the polished and rich language on pupils' lips and in their books.

Leaders have a clear vision that is shared successfully between both schools in the federation. This is based on providing education of a high standard for pupils. This encourages them to nurture the skills and understanding necessary to become responsible members of their community.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Excellent
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure continuity in pupils' information and communication technology skills as they move through the school
- R2 Share more good practice across the two schools in the federation

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite Ysgol Abercaseg to prepare a case study on its work in relation to developing pupils' independent learning skills, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

On entry to the school, many pupils have skills that are lower than expected for their age. During their time there, most make very good progress in their learning from their starting points, including pupils with additional learning needs.

Pupils develop their oracy skills particularly well. As they move through the foundation phase, most use the language with complete confidence when discussing their adults and working with their peers. In the nursery, they discuss stories and everyday events confidently with each other and adults. By Year 2, most pupils use polished language of a high standard when discussing their work and when choosing a piece of which they are proud, and give sensible reasons for their choice. They talk in extended sentences and use mature vocabulary. Nearly all pupils listen attentively to adults and each other. They respond appropriately to instructions and to stories and class assemblies. This adds to the sense of an industrious routine and respect throughout the school.

The youngest pupils develop elementary reading skills at an early stage, and show an interest in books and stories. These skills develop effectively throughout the school. They read with increasing fluency and pay good attention to punctuation. Most pupils read well and correct themselves if they make a mistake. Nearly all pupils use their knowledge of simple phonics to read new or unfamiliar words successfully, within their ability. Many use simple dictionaries effectively.

Nearly all pupils' writing skills are developing well throughout the school. Many of the youngest pupils are beginning to make suitable marks to accompany a story, for example the story of the three bears. They use an electronic tablet to practice forming letters correctly. In Year 1, most succeed in writing a series of exciting sentences to re-tell a class story. By Year 2, nearly all pupils write for different purposes to a high standard under the guidance of an adult, for example in letters to thank visitors for coming to the school, and portrayals of characters in a story. A majority of pupils use mature vocabulary in more extended sentences. They use writing frames skilfully to produce work of a high standard.

Most pupils' mathematical skills are developing particularly well. In the nursery, most pupils arrange objects by size successfully, count forwards and backwards by one and are beginning to recognise and discuss number sentences. By Year 2, they are mathematicians who deal with work at a high level, and they have a sound understanding of the relationship between numbers. They handle numbers in the thousands, and double and halve numbers up to one hundred, including decimals. They measure correctly in centimetres, grams and millimetres. Nearly all pupils apply their mathematical knowledge to solve increasingly complex problems, both independently and with a partner, for example when solving sums in order to use the information to discover and measure the correct belt for 'Siôn the giant'.

Nearly all pupils persevere exceptionally well and use their thinking skills skilfully to apply their understanding to solve problems successfully. A good example of this is when they need to solve increasingly difficult sums to choose a code that unlocks part of a story from the Mabinogi. Pupils sort the text according to the correct tale before placing the text in the correct order.

Most pupils develop appropriate information and communication technology (ICT) skills with support from adults. They use different publishing packages effectively, for example to create an invitation to an author to visit the school, and to show pictures and text about their trip to a local forest. They are able to control a programmable toy successfully. Most are able to input simple data into a spreadsheet in order to create a graph with the information, for example about the favourite food of pupils in the class. Most are able to save and retrieve their work successfully.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

All pupils succeed in working independently from a young age and, by the end of the foundation phase, nearly all pupils show much greater persistence and perseverance than expected. They guide their own learning very successfully, for example when completing mathematical challenge tasks, which require them to solve a number of mathematical activities before completing the task in full. They have a very sound understanding of their attainment and the next steps that they need to take in order to improve their work. This prepares them excellently to be lifelong learners. All pupils contribute very effectively to class work by expressing an opinion about what they would like to learn. As a result, they are very enthusiastic learners who always strive to do their best.

The pupil's voice is given a prominent place in the school's life and work. The number of groups that represent the views of others fulfil their roles maturely and sensibly. They present comprehensive reports on their work to governors and parents confidently and with obvious pride. Typical examples include the work of 'Dreigiau Caseg' to promote the use of the Welsh language on the playground. This contributes well towards creating the strong Welsh ethos that exists within the school. The 'sgwad syniadau' (ideas squad) helps the school to support and maintain good attendance levels by arranging weekly award ceremonies. This has a very positive effect on pupils' attendance levels.

Pupils work and play together happily and peacefully, which creates a very special ethos at the school. They are extremely polite, share with each other, take turns and listen attentively to the ideas of others. They treat each other and adults with respect and care, and are very keen to offer a helping hand to others. Nearly all pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and outside the classroom.

Nearly all pupils have a very good understanding of how to stay healthy by eating a balanced diet, and keeping fit through exercise. Many attend after-school fitness clubs and nearly all use their break time to follow the adventure trail, practice ball skills or skip. Nearly all pupils understand the importance of ensuring a sustainable world, for example by helping to organise activities such as recycling plastic milk bottles to make mathematics equipment and pencil holders. Nearly all pupils develop as conscientious moral citizens by organising activities to support charitable organisations, for example by raising money to establish clean water reservoirs in Africa and Asia.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The quality of teaching is good. All staff have a sound understanding of the principles and pedagogy of the foundation phase, and this develops pupils'

independence skills at a very early stage. All teachers provide a variety of activities that stimulate and engage pupils' interest successfully. Teaching is based on high and consistent challenge and high expectations by teachers. They make effective use of a variety of teaching methods successfully, which ensure that nearly all pupils achieve well and engage fully in their learning.

All teachers have a very strong relationship with pupils and they give good consideration to individuals' needs. In all classes, assistants help teachers successfully. All adults question pupils skilfully in order to extend and develop their responses further. They insist on high levels of language accuracy continuously.

Teachers assess pupils' work correctly and make good use of their assessments to set targets for pupils in order to improve their numeracy and literacy skills. Teachers provide purposeful and efficient oral and written feedback, and ensure that pupils understand what they need to do in order to improve. Pupils make the most of the wide-ranging opportunities to assess their own work and discuss their work with a partner. This creates effective independent learners who are able to identify good aspects and aspects for improvement in their own work and that of others.

All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and, as a result, lessons are conducted methodically, industriously and respectfully.

Teachers' schemes of work are based on interesting themes, and both indoor and outdoor activities nurture pupils' independent skills extremely effectively. Provision to develop pupils' numeracy skills challenge them to fulfil work of a high standard across the areas of learning successfully. Structured planning to develop pupils' reading skills has a positive effect on their standards. The way in which teachers plan and create opportunities for pupils to develop their oral skills is one of the school's strengths. As a result, nearly all pupils communicate confidently and use polished and correct language. Provision to develop pupils' writing skills helps them to learn correct language patterns and extend their vocabulary successfully. However, there are few opportunities for them to apply their good skills independently across the areas of learning. On the whole, provision to develop ICT is not structured enough to ensure continuity in pupils' skills as they move through the school.

Provision for the Welsh dimension is very robust, for example by competing successfully in eisteddfodau, emulating the work of Welsh artists, learning clog dancing and hearing various traditional stories and rhymes. Visits to the local area, such as Parc Meurig and the town of Bethesda, enrich pupils' experiences effectively.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a caring and happy community. Staff provide successful help and support to pupils and encourage them to take pride in their work and to contribute significantly to the various activities that take place.

The rich culture of respect, equality and fairness promotes the school's aims successfully. This is reinforced through purposeful experiences, such as studies of other countries and charitable activities. This nurtures pupils' respect towards other cultures and encourages them to grow into considerate citizens.

Staff know the pupils and their families well and have a sound and effective relationship with them. Staff share information about the school's activities with parents regularly through the website and curricular meetings. This enables parents to support their children's work successfully.

The school has effective arrangements for tracking pupils' progress. This enables teachers to gain up-to-date information about pupils' progress and attainment in order to support individuals and specific groups of pupils quickly. As a result, provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good. All pupils with additional learning needs have a purposeful individual development plan, in addition to clear and definite targets. Staff use these effectively as they plan appropriate interventions for them. Support staff are very aware of specific pupils' improvement targets and support them very well to achieve them. This enables nearly all pupils to make good progress in their literacy and numeracy skills. The school works successfully with various agencies, such as the educational psychologist and specialist behaviour and speech teachers, to provide specialist and purposeful support for pupils who need it.

The school has a clear awareness of individual pupils' health, emotional and social needs and, as a result, it succeeds in supporting these pupils well. One of the strong features of provision is the way in which the school includes all pupils in all activities. Various personal and social education activities develop nearly all pupils' social and emotional skills well. A police officer visits regularly and teaches pupils how to stay safe outside the school, for example when they are on the internet.

Pupils are given a number of valuable opportunities to shoulder responsibilities by being members of different councils or leadership groups, for example the 'Sgwad Syniadau' (Ideas Squad), 'Ffrindiau Ffitrwydd' (Fitness Friends) and 'Bydis Buarth' (Playground Buddies). This expands their understanding of the importance of being active citizens and contributing regularly within their community. Considering their age, pupils take their responsibilities seriously and take pride in their work. This element is one of the school's strengths.

The school has effective procedures to encourage pupils to eat and drink healthily, and staff promote pupils' understanding of the importance of exercise successfully.

The school has procedures and policies that ensure that provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Staff organise valuable opportunities for pupils to reflect in assemblies and during circle time.

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

Leadership and management: Good

Leaders have a clear vision that is based on providing education of a high standard for pupils, which encourages them to nurture the skills and understanding that are needed to become responsible members of their community. For over a year, the headteacher has developed her role robustly as the leader of the federation. The agreed vision for the federation is shared appropriately with pupils, staff and members of the governing body. Teachers support the headteacher skilfully by taking responsibility for developing aspects of the school's life and work, such as

literacy and numeracy, effectively. This has a positive effect on pupils' standards, particularly their numeracy and oracy skills. Leaders are now beginning to share good practice that is seen in both schools with each other to develop consistency in provision. A notable example includes sharing methods for learning to read, including providing advice in the form of a video for parents to support their children at home. This is beginning to have a positive effect on provision and pupils' outcomes, in addition to developing teachers' leadership skills effectively. However, the federation is in its early stages and these practices have not been developed in full across both schools.

All members of staff have a sound understanding of their roles, and they meet regularly to discuss provision, outcomes and pupils' wellbeing. They show a strong commitment to developing and promoting further improvements by implementing a number of purposeful strategies, such as improving pupils' oracy and ICT skills. A strong sense of teamwork ensures that everyone works together effectively to fulfil the school's vision successfully.

Since establishing the governing body, governors have worked effectively with the headteacher to develop purposeful procedures to help them to gain a clear overview of the working life of both schools. Regular meetings, and frequent information in the form of reports from the headteacher and other leaders, ensure that they have a sound knowledge of the school's performance, which enables them to support the school and hold it to account for its performance successfully. In order to enrich this further, governors visit the schools in turn in order to work with leaders and staff to scrutinise books, discuss with staff and pupils, and conduct beneficial learning walks. A good example of this is the learning walk across both schools to learn more about pupils' writing development from the nursery to Year 6. This ensures that they have a clear overview of the work of both schools.

There are purposeful procedures for the self-evaluation of core elements of the school's life and work. Leaders make effective use of the analysis of performance data and the findings of book scrutiny, and also gather the views of parents and pupils. They make good use of the views of other strategic partners who visit the school, including the local authority and headteachers from local schools. Overall, the self-evaluation report is purposeful and provides a clear picture of the school's life and work. There is a strong link between the outcomes of that report and the priorities in the school development plan. This plan focuses firmly on improving standards and identifies staff responsibilities clearly. All staff take part in evaluating progress against the priorities and are very aware of their responsibilities to achieve the targets.

The school has an appropriate number of qualified staff to deliver the curriculum. Overall, leaders take advantage of staff expertise appropriately, for example by teaching physical and creative development across the school. Arrangements for managing staff performance are effective and set beneficial objectives to develop their skills and understanding of issues that are based on the school's priorities. As a result, all staff are given appropriate opportunities to develop professionally in line with their personal needs and those of the school.

The headteacher and governors manage expenditure carefully. Efficient use is made of the pupil development grant to support specific pupils in areas such as literacy and numeracy, in addition to providing musical instrument lessons.

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.

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