



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

A report on

**Ysgol Eifionydd
Porthmadog
Gwynedd
LL49 9HS**

Date of inspection: April 2018

by

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

About Ysgol Eifionydd

Ysgol Eifionydd is a naturally bilingual secondary school for 11-16 year-old pupils. It is situated in the town of Porthmadog in Gwynedd, and pupils come from the towns of Porthmadog and Criccieth, and the rural area of Eifionydd. There are 364 pupils on roll, which is 67 fewer pupils than at the time of the last inspection in October 2011.

Around 8.9% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the national figure of 17%. Seventeen per cent of pupils are on the school's additional learning needs register, which is lower than the national average. Two point two per cent (2.2%) of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is very close to the national figure.

Sixty-nine per cent of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. A very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The headteacher has been in post since April 2016. The school's senior management team includes the headteacher and two assistant headteachers.

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 Eifionydd is a close community with a caring and supportive ethos. Most pupils behave well and treat their teachers, visitors and peers with respect. Many pupils have strong oral skills and make valuable contributions to the school and the area through extra-curricular and charitable activities. Overall, pupils enjoy their time at the school a great deal.

Efficient leadership has ensured a strong sense of pride and belonging among the school's pupils and staff. However, it has not had enough of an effect on pupils' achievement in important areas or ensured teaching of a consistently high quality.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Improve standards across the school
- R2 Strengthen the quality of teaching across the school to stretch pupils of all abilities
- R3 Improve the effectiveness of middle leaders so that they are wholly accountable for all aspects of provision and standards within their areas of responsibility
- R4 Sharpen self-evaluation and planning for improvement processes to include a clear evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement in the standards and quality of teaching
- R5 Improve provision for pupils with additional learning needs

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Overall, a majority of pupils make valuable progress in their subject understanding and skills. However, in key stage 4, pupils' achievement in many indicators has not compared favourably with the performance of pupils in similar schools over the last two years.

In many lessons, pupils recall previous learning correctly and build on this beneficially. They listen attentively and respectfully to the teacher and to other pupils' contributions. In these lessons, pupils work together effectively in pairs or small groups. For example, in physical education lessons, pupils evaluate and check each other's high jump technique successfully.

Many pupils have strong oral skills. They convey their views clearly when discussing their ideas in groups or pairs on topics such as the effect of flooding on Bangladesh. A few more able pupils use natural, idiomatic language skilfully and use terminology confidently. However, in a minority of lessons that are conducted through the medium of Welsh, a majority of pupils discuss their work with their peers in English.

Many pupils are confident readers. They distil relevant information from various sources successfully and analyse texts effectively, and come to sensible conclusions. For example, pupils in religious education lessons identify the key features of the practices of different religions skilfully, and their importance to believers. In a few lessons, pupils make strong progress in developing analytical and reasoning skills. For example, in Welsh lessons, pupils analyse the story 'Eli Brown' skilfully and draw information from it successfully in order to reach thorough conclusions about the characters. However, in a minority of lessons, a few pupils are too passive and lose interest in their work.

A majority of pupils write at length for a wide range of purposes and audiences. More able pupils write strong extended pieces that analyse a range of contrasting views. For example, in Welsh Bacalaureate lessons, pupils discuss child poverty ably and skilfully. A very few experiment with various turns of phrase and write interestingly and originally. For example, in geography lessons, pupils write a letter imagining the experience of a holiday in a location with a rainforest. However, a minority of pupils produce written work that is too concise and limited. In both languages and across many subjects, a minority of pupils make basic spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors, including misspelling key subject terminology.

There are frequent examples of pupils developing their creative skills across a range of subjects. For example, in music lessons, pupils create a storyboard as a basis for their musical composition on the subject 'The beaver'. In art lessons, pupils experiment with watercolours, chalk and paint when creating facial portraits. They also develop their thinking skills effectively, for example in physics, when considering how a 'slinky' responds to external influence.

Overall, a majority of pupils develop basic number skills, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, soundly. Many pupils analyse data correctly

and produce suitable graphs and tables to display their results. For example, in technology lessons, many pupils gather information through a questionnaire about the desirable features of a pencil holder, and present the findings clearly on a pie chart and analyse the findings in a comprehensive report. However, pupils do not apply their number skills successfully in order to solve everyday problems often enough.

In a few subjects, many pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) skills appropriately to undertake word processing, create presentations and handle data. However, pupils do not make enough progress across the subjects in their higher-level information technology skills, for example handling spreadsheets and databases, and modelling.

Performance in the level 2 indicator including English or Welsh and mathematics has been lower than in similar schools in two of the last three years. Performance in the capped points score has also been lower in comparison with the performance of similar schools in two of the last three years. Pupils do not make enough progress from the end of key stage 2 to key stage 4 in these indicators.

The percentage of pupils who succeed in gaining five or more GCSE A*-A grades or equivalent has been lower than in other similar schools over the last three years.

The performance of boys and girls in most of the main indicators in key stage 4 has declined over time and is lower than in similar schools. The performance of the very few pupils who are eligible for free school meals is lower than the average of the same group of pupils in similar schools. Overall, pupils with additional learning needs do not make enough progress.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Pupils' wellbeing is a strong aspect of the life of Ysgol Eifionydd. Nearly all pupils feel safe and are confident that the school responds to their concerns and the very rare cases of bullying. Most pupils behave well and are respectful towards their teachers, visitors and their peers.

Pupils' views play a prominent part in the school's work and make a valuable contribution towards decisions. The school council has had a positive influence on school life, for example when producing the school's behaviour policy and anti-bullying campaign. The sports ambassadors have raised significant amounts of money towards more sports equipment for pupils during lunchtime by organising and holding events such as the Santa Dash. The language council works diligently in order to have a positive effect on pupils' social use of the Welsh language through events such as a Welsh disco and beat boxing. Many pupils are very active throughout the year in raising money for local and national charities. They play a key role in creating a strong sense of community within the school. Most pupils understand clearly the importance of eating healthily. Pupils attend clubs, work support sessions and extra-curricular activities during morning, lunchtime and after-school sessions.

Many pupils show a positive attitude towards their work and persevere with their tasks. Many show pride in their work and present their work neatly and methodically.

Many pupils work together effectively and enthusiastically in pairs and groups. In these discussions, pupils respect other people's contributions and are considerate of different points of view. However, in a few lessons, a minority of pupils do not make enough progress because they lose interest and motivation in their work during the lesson.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Most teachers have a positive working relationship with pupils and manage the classroom environment effectively. Many have sound subject knowledge, communicate clearly and are very good language models.

In a majority of lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils and prepare stimulating resources. In these lessons, teachers plan a series of beneficial activities purposefully, which ensure that pupils make progress in their subject knowledge and skills. These lessons have clear aims and objectives and a lively tempo that motivate pupils and engage their participation.

In the very few lessons that are particularly effective, teachers have an infectious passion and enthusiasm for teaching their subjects. They have very high expectations of pupils. In these lessons, teachers plan very carefully and model examples of work of a high standard in order to ensure excellent achievement and progress. In these lessons, teachers ask incisive and probing questions in order to deepen pupils' understanding.

In a minority of lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations. Activities are not planned in enough detail to stretch pupils of all abilities. Teachers do not exemplify good answers and practice to ensure that pupils are clear about what is expected of them, and their presentations are too long. In these lessons, pupils do not develop as independent learners, as they disengage from the learning process.

A majority of teachers provide beneficial feedback that provides pupils with effective guidance on how to improve their work. They provide pupils with wise and sensitive advice and purposeful targets to ensure improvement. However, a minority of teachers provide feedback that is too superficial. Only in a minority of cases do teachers ensure that pupils respond productively to their comments and improve the quality of their work. Overall, there is inconsistency within and across departments in terms of the quality of feedback for pupils.

Overall, the quality of teaching is adequate and needs improvement.

The school's leaders consider pupils' aspirations carefully when planning the curriculum. The school works successfully and flexibly with nearby providers in order to provide a broad curriculum in key stage 4. There is a valuable range of GCSE courses, in addition to vocational options in subjects such as engineering and agriculture.

The school plans effectively to deliver the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification in key stage 4. The school has arranged beneficial opportunities for pupils to work effectively with partner primary schools as part of their community work. For example, they plan and lead sports training for pupils in nearby primary schools. The school has strong links with its partner primary schools, which include working

together on aspects of provision in order to ensure that Year 7 pupils settle without fuss.

There is a broad range of extra-curricular activities to enrich pupils' learning experiences. Valuable visits are organised to organisations such as Ysbyty Gwynedd, universities, local engineering companies and to the location of the set of a popular television programme.

The school succeeds in providing valuable experiences to develop pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. As a result, pupils use their literacy skills confidently in a variety of contexts. An example of this is the evaluation work of a high standard in technology as pupils design biscuits. Provision for numeracy has been mapped appropriately across the curriculum. However, the range of opportunities to develop these skills across the relevant subjects is too limited. Cross-school arrangements to support pupils with weak literacy and numeracy skills are comprehensive. Provision to develop ICT skills across subjects is under-developed.

The school provides a variety of up-to-date experiences and activities to promote the pupils' formal and social use of the Welsh language. The language council has been established recently to encourage pupils to become confident, and highly cultured bilingual individuals. Activities include visits by authors, rock gigs, music workshops and a drama workshop.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Ysgol Eifionydd is a caring community that provides its pupils with valuable support and guidance. It has an inclusive and positive ethos that promotes pupils' health and wellbeing successfully.

The school has robust strategies and procedures in order to track, monitor and promote attendance and wellbeing. These include effective reward systems. Staff work successfully with parents and a range of agencies to provide consistent and robust support to increase and maintain pupils' attendance. There is a variety of useful interventions, such as the 'Buddies Club' and the inclusion unit, which contribute effectively towards the wellbeing and care of vulnerable pupils. They have helped these pupils to improve their behaviour, wellbeing and personal skills significantly.

The school has recently adapted its academic progress-tracking system appropriately. Overall, this information is used purposefully to support pupils who are in danger of underachieving. However, these systems have not been successful enough in tracking pupils' progress in many of the main indicators in key stage 4.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is appropriate. Good use is made of support staff to provide effective support for these pupils. The quality of individual education plans for these pupils has improved recently. However, the school does not track the progress of these pupils against their targets effectively enough. As a result, pupils with additional learning needs do not make enough progress.

Pupils benefit from valuable opportunities to develop their personal skills by taking part in numerous extra-curricular activities and clubs, for example rugby for boys and girls, a drama club and an art club. The 'Porth' is a valuable resource where Year 10

pupils provide homework support for younger pupils during lunchtime. Pupils also undertake various roles enthusiastically and respond confidently to the beneficial opportunities to voice their opinions on the school's provision. Typical examples are the leading role of the school council, which has made a beneficial contribution to improving aspects, such as the selection of healthy food that is available in the canteen and installing a water fountain and picnic tables on the school grounds.

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to improve their fitness and their understanding of how to live healthily and stay healthy. The school has robust arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

The personal and social education programme is comprehensive and contributes effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are given valuable opportunities to develop their understanding of equality and diversity. The important contributions of external speakers, and presentations such as 'Mirror, Mirror' on issues relating to sexuality, contribute towards pupils' understanding of a wide range of social issues. The school works successfully with external agencies in order to provide beneficial experiences for pupils. For example, there is a weekly visit by a community police officer in order to discuss and ask questions about issues that are important to pupils.

The school has a comprehensive programme of relevant opportunities and activities that prepare pupils very thoroughly for the world of work or the next step in their lives. For example, there is a two-day residential course at Coleg Glynllifon for pupils who are interested in agriculture. There is also a useful programme of education in relation to employment, which includes a period of beneficial work experience with local employers for all pupils in Year 10. Beneficial advice and mentoring is arranged to support them further.

The school communicates effectively with parents, for example through the 'Min y Traeth' newsletter and social media. Parents and carers receive valuable information about their children's progress, effort and attendance through interim and full reports.

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

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher, with the support of the senior management team, has established a clear vision, and they work closely with each other and the staff to realise this vision. They promote professional values and conduct in their day-to-day work, and develop clear co-operation between managers and staff. Over the last two years in particular, the senior team has succeeded in improving communication processes between staff at all levels and creating an atmosphere of trust across the school.

Over the last three years, robust leadership and effective planning for improvement have contributed towards improving attendance rates, ensuring good behaviour and maintaining relatively high standards in mathematics, Welsh and the level 1 threshold. However, this planning has not had enough of an effect on a few important aspects, including the achievement of ALN pupils, or ensured that teaching is of a consistently high quality.

The responsibilities of the senior management team have been distributed suitably and are clear to all staff. Organisation and lines of accountability are also clear. There is a programme of regular meetings that focus appropriately on the school's priorities. However, the senior management team's extensive duties limit the time that they have to act strategically. Meetings focus too much on operational issues at the expense of strategic planning. As a result, this has limited the ability of managers to ensure accountability and consistency across and within departments.

Governors are very supportive and make valuable contributions to school life. They are developing an understanding of the work of individual departments. However, governors have not challenged the school adequately to raise standards in key stage 4 or improve standards in the departments that are underachieving.

Through useful self-evaluation processes, the school gathers first-hand evidence of the quality of learning and teaching. For example, managers visit lessons and scrutinise pupils' work regularly, in addition to seeking the views of parents and pupils. Leaders' appropriate understanding of the school's performance is evaluative, on the whole, and provides a firm basis to plan improvements in many areas. However, the self-evaluation processes as a whole do not enable leaders to gain a realistic picture of the school's performance. For example, leaders place too much significance on comparisons with the averages for Wales and the local authority, rather than with similar schools throughout Wales. They also do not use all of the data analyses that are available to them to enlighten their evaluations. In addition, they do not consider the quality of teaching or leadership effectively in terms of their effect on standards. As a result, their overall evaluation of standards and teaching is too generous.

The whole-school improvement plan builds appropriately on the findings of the self-evaluation processes. The priorities within it are suitable and there are sensible activities to improve specific aspects. Overall, the success criteria are appropriate.

A majority of middle managers have a suitable understanding of standards in their departments. However, the effectiveness of middle managers is too varied. A minority do not have a rigorous enough understanding of the areas for development within their departments. Pastoral leaders do not self-evaluate or plan formally for improvement.

The school provides a variety of appropriate activities to support staff's professional learning. It responds positively to the development needs of individual staff and whole-school issues by organising internal training days. Teachers receive beneficial opportunities to observe others and share good practice amongst themselves.

The school is staffed appropriately and nearly all teachers teach within their specialisms. The school uses administrative and support staff effectively to support teachers and pupils. The headteacher, business manager and the governors' finance sub-committee monitor the school's budget robustly and have ensured that the school is not in debt. They operate soundly to ensure that the school has plenty of learning resources and purposeful accommodation. Relevant use is made of grants to support national priorities, including the pupil development grant and the school improvement grant.

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:

Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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