



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

A report on

**Ysgol Maes Y Llan
Maes y Llan Lane
Ruabon
Wrexham
LL14 6AE**

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by

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

About Ysgol Maes Y Llan

Ysgol Maes y Llan is in Ruabon, near Wrexham. Currently, there are 198 pupils on roll, aged from 3 to 11, including 19 nursery children who attend part-time. Pupil numbers are increasing from year to year. There are seven classes at the school. Six classes contain pupils from more than one year group.

About 13% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is below the national average (19%). Most pupils are of white British ethnicity. A few pupils speak English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh at home. The school identifies that around 19% of pupils have additional learning needs. This is slightly below the national average (21%). Very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

The headteacher took up his post in June 2017, following periods as deputy headteacher and acting headteacher. The school's previous inspection was in March 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

Most pupils in Ysgol Maes y Llan make good progress from their individual starting points. Most pupils' attitudes to learning are good and, in key stage 2, pupils develop well as independent learners. Pupils extend their skills well in literacy, Welsh and information and communication technology (ICT) but less so in numeracy. The quality of teaching is generally good and most teachers provide pupils with interesting learning experiences that engage their interest and motivate them to become resilient learners. However, the provision in a minority of early years' classes does not promote foundation phase philosophy well enough and adult-directed activities predominate.

Provision for ensuring pupils' care, support and guidance is a strength of the school. Many pupils take on responsibilities that promote their life skills well, and contribute strongly to the life and work of the school.

The headteacher and senior school leaders have a clear vision for improvement and work effectively to promote pupils' wellbeing and raise standards of achievement.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the balance of continuous, enhanced and focused activities in the foundation phase to develop pupils' independent learning skills
- R2 Ensure regular opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R3 Increase rates of attendance

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

Many pupils enter the school with levels of skills, knowledge and understanding that are generally below those expected of pupils of a similar age. During their time at school, most make good progress from their individual starting points. Overall, boys and girls achieve equally well. Most pupils with additional learning needs respond well to the support they receive and make good progress towards their individual targets.

Throughout the school, most pupils listen carefully in classes. In the foundation phase, many pupils speak clearly and confidently to adults and to one another, for example when acting out the tale of the three little pigs. Most make good progress in learning letters and sounds so that in Year 2, they use their knowledge of phonics well to read unknown words correctly. A majority of older pupils in the foundation phase take note of punctuation to read expressively and have good recall of what they have read. Most make good progress in writing. They form letters correctly and use consistent spacing when writing in a range of genres. For example, they write interesting recounts of their visit to an aquarium and re-tell the story of 'Red Riding Hood', using well-chosen adjectives to add interest. Most pupils apply their literacy skills well in other areas of the curriculum. For example, in their topic 'Dragons and Castles', they write vivid descriptions.

In key stage 2, many pupils speak well. The more able are articulate and choose their words carefully to make their views clear. They empathise with, for example evacuees to the countryside during the Second World War. In Year 4, many read expressively, including complex text in non-fiction books well. They use contents pages and indexes efficiently to locate specific items. By Year 6, many pupils are able readers who read regularly for enjoyment. They apply their skills well to help them research their class topics. Many pupils choose to read challenging texts. They are beginning to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words from their context.

Most pupils in key stage 2 write in a range of styles that suit their purpose and intended audience. They write in a range of genres, such as diaries, newspaper reports and descriptions of people and places. A majority of older pupils' writing is of a high standard. They write neatly and present their work carefully. Most use a good range of punctuation, including speech marks, accurately. Most spell common words correctly and make sensible approximations of more difficult words. Many write at length when retelling a story from another character's point of view. For example, pupils in Year 6 write letters to Macbeth, persuading him to commit murder. Planning and redrafting their writing contributes to the high standards achieved by many pupils. Across the school, most pupils use their literacy skills well in many areas of the curriculum. For example, in their topic on Welsh rivers, they make notes on sources, estuaries and bridges and use the information to write interesting fact files.

In the foundation phase, many pupils make good progress in developing their mathematical skills. For example, they read, write and order numbers accurately up to a hundred and distinguish between odd and even numbers. Most develop their mental addition and subtraction skills well. Most pupils name common

two-dimensional shapes correctly and make symmetrical repeating patterns accurately. They tell the time on analogue and digital clock faces and, following a dinosaur hunt, draw accurate block graphs to show how many of each they found.

In key stage 2, most continue to progress well in many aspects of mathematics. Many have quick and accurate recall of times tables and other number facts and they work methodically to carry out calculations that involve more than one operation. For example, they calculate the least expensive way of buying and decorating a Christmas tree from various suppliers. Most convert fractions and decimals to percentages correctly and use the terms mean, mode and range accurately when comparing the season's results for football teams. In science investigations, pupils record measurements in tables, which they present on various graphs. For example, they show the rates of descent of different sized parachutes in a bar chart. However, pupils' application of other numeracy skills across the curriculum is limited.

In the foundation phase, most pupils use tablet computers and programmable robots confidently. They log on independently and select a suitable program, which enables them to create pictograms. In their topic 'Under the Sea', they scan quick response codes to read information about turtles. Many pupils are developing their keyboard skills gradually. In key stage 2, many pupils are making good progress in developing their ICT skills well. They use a broad range of educational and commercial software confidently to research topics and present information in a variety of ways. For example, they research life in Wales under the Romans and create comic strips that contain photographs and text in boxes and speech bubbles to present the experiences of a wartime evacuee. Older pupils create a branching database of mini-beasts and use presentation software to explain how people's diets during the Second World War differ from that of today. They use coding skills competently to direct sprites around the screen.

Many pupils in the foundation phase make good progress in learning to speak Welsh. They respond well to their teachers' instructions in Welsh when asked to stand, sit or form a line. In lessons, they count to ten in Welsh and use their knowledge of basic vocabulary to complete simple sentences about different types of houses. In key stage 2, nearly all pupils have a positive attitude to the Welsh language and often greet one another naturally in Welsh. As they move from one class to the next, they build a useful working vocabulary that enables them to hold sensible conversations and to write detailed descriptions of fictional characters such as Lady Macbeth. They frequently write at length in Welsh with accurate spelling and punctuation, including common idioms occasionally to add interest.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils are confident, enthusiastic learners who enjoy their time in school. They participate fully in lessons and, in key stage 2, they develop valuable, independent learning skills. They take increasing responsibility for their own learning and make good use of opportunities to learn outside lessons, including when they join after school clubs and use the dinnertime library.

The standard of behaviour is high in lessons and around the school. Nearly all pupils respect the views of others and work well with a partner or as part of a group. As pupils move through the school, they make increasingly effective use of their

personal targets and the information provided through teachers' marking to improve aspects of their work. Nearly all use opportunities to assess their own progress and that of others constructively and this helps them to develop a clear understanding of how to make progress. Nearly all pupils make very strong progress in learning to work with purpose and resilience. They sustain concentration well and persevere when they find tasks challenging.

Nearly all pupils make good progress in developing their understanding of a healthy lifestyle. They have a good awareness of how to stay safe, including when they use the internet. They know whom to go to if they are upset or have concerns. Most choose to be physically active during break times and many participate actively in sports after school, including the well-attended rugby and cricket clubs.

Members of the school council play an active role in the school. For instance, they took part in the recent interviews to select a new headteacher. They participate in learning walks with the headteacher and school governors. Pupils across the school undertake a variety of responsibilities including working as playground buddies, prefects and eCadets. Older key stage 2 pupils had to submit applications with references from parents, to apply for roles to organise and run the recent book fair. They undertook a full range of roles successfully including publicity, arranging competitions and organising refreshments. Nearly all pupils carry out these roles conscientiously and with increasing maturity, developing their social skills effectively.

Nearly all pupils arrive at school on time and most attend regularly. However, when compared with similar schools, attendance rates over the past four years have nearly always placed the school in the lower 50% or the lowest 25%.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. All staff members have positive working relationships with pupils. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils and challenge them to achieve well and to develop as resilient, independent learners. They plan clear learning objectives for most lessons, ensuring that pupils know what they must do to succeed. Teachers use a variety of methods that engage pupils and ensure that most lessons proceed at an appropriate pace. Nearly all teachers provide pupils with helpful feedback that enables them to improve and extend their work. They encourage pupils to evaluate their own work, and that of others, by referring to success criteria that relate closely to the lessons' objectives. Teachers know their pupils well. They monitor and track their progress carefully using a range of informal and formal tests. They record this on an electronic tracking system that allows staff to measure progress and set appropriate targets for improvement.

The curriculum in key stage 2 has many strengths. It is organised well to match most pupils' needs and interests. For example, teachers make imaginative use of a broad range of texts to inspire and motivate pupils to engage enthusiastically in their learning. As a result, learning is purposeful and in context. All teachers plan skilfully to meet the differing needs of the pupils, particularly in mathematics lessons. However, across the school there are limited planned opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum.

Nearly all teachers plan interesting activities that allow for the highly successful application of literacy skills in work across the curriculum in both key stages. In the foundation phase, pupils have regular opportunities to develop their literacy skills, notably reading and writing. For example, many pupils write for a range of purposes, often at length, when they describe how caterpillars emerge from larvae.

Overall, provision in the early years does not reflect foundation phase philosophy well enough. Many activities are strongly adult-led and pupils have insufficient opportunities to lead their own learning and engage in a suitable range of activities of their own choosing. Consequently, pupils' development as independent learners is restricted.

Throughout the school, teachers plan valuable opportunities for pupils to visit places of interest around Wales as part of their topic work. For example, trips to the Llangollen Eisteddfod and to Chirk Castle promote pupils' understanding of the culture and heritage of Wales suitably. There are good opportunities for pupils to study Welsh myths and legends and the work of famous Welsh artists and singers.

Provision for developing pupils' skills in the Welsh language is strong. Staff encourage pupils to be confident and enthusiastic in using the language and provide regular opportunities for pupils to speak, read and write in Welsh.

The curriculum provides imaginative opportunities, especially in key stage 2, for pupils to develop and apply their skills in ICT purposefully. The school's arrangements to meet the requirements of the digital competency framework are developing well.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school provides a supportive, caring environment where all pupils are valued and treated with respect. There is a successful initiative designed to encourage pupils to have high aspirations, to persevere and meet challenges with resilience. Staff believe that all pupils' abilities can be developed and that effort leads to success. They encourage pupils to think positively. For example, instead of saying "I can't do this," pupils are encouraged to say "I'll try a different strategy". As a result, nearly all pupils are confident and successful learners, who are prepared to learn from their mistakes as well as their successes. The positive thinking approach also encourages pupils take on responsibilities and to develop their leadership skills.

All staff use a positive approach to behaviour management successfully. Staff have recently put in place a one-page profile for each pupil. These include information provided by parents and contain details on the support that pupils indicate that they need, activities that they enjoy and those that they find challenging. Support staff use the profiles, for example to settle new pupils into school. Staff ensure that pupils with social and emotional needs receive strong support both within the school and from specialist agencies.

The school tracks and monitors pupils' progress systematically. Staff use the information effectively to consider the progress and development of specific groups of pupils, including those who are more able or in need of support. Staff monitor pupils' attendance closely and use a range of systems to encourage high attendance,

including the use of text messages to contact parents, close collaboration with local schools to implement an agreed policy and highlighting the importance of attendance in weekly newsletters. Despite these good efforts, a significant number of pupils were absent from school during term time last year for family holidays.

Staff are very effective in identifying pupils' additional learning needs at an early stage. They ensure that additional support is flexible and matches closely each targeted pupil's needs. The effective provision ensures nearly all pupils make strong progress towards the targets in their individual plans. All staff have undertaken beneficial training that enables them to support pupils' additional needs successfully. Training with the speech and language service, for example, has ensured that staff identify pupils' difficulties precisely and provide specific whole-school support for these pupils.

The school has a strong partnership with parents and keeps them well informed through weekly newsletters, a phone communication 'app' and the school website. Staff provide valuable opportunities for parents to develop their abilities to support their child's learning, for example by using learning logs and a homework club where parents attend by invitation and learn how to support homework more effectively.

Many aspects of the curriculum, together with the ethos of the school, provide extensive opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of moral issues. These include developing a clear awareness of fair play, the importance of honesty, aspects of equality and issues linked to anti-bullying. A wide range of visits out of school supports pupils' cultural development successfully, including the recent visit by key stage 2 pupils to Stratford upon Avon to explore aspects of Shakespeare's life. The school provides an extensive range of extra-curricular clubs that provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills. These include sports, cookery, entrepreneurial skills, craftwork and a Welsh club where parents are invited to join their child in learning Welsh. However, the provision for developing pupils' spiritual understanding is limited.

The school has the appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Staff provide a wide range of opportunities within the curriculum to support pupils' personal development including, for example growing up sessions for upper key stage 2 pupils. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher has a clear vision for the future development of the school. Central to this vision is a determination to ensure that all pupils have a safe and supportive environment in which to thrive and develop as aspirational independent learners. An experienced senior leadership team that shares his high expectations of all staff and pupils supports him effectively. As leading professionals in the school, all lead by example. They place a high priority on promoting pupils' social and emotional development and this ensures that nearly all pupils are happy, confident and eager to learn.

Senior leaders ensure that all members of staff share and support the school's aims and objectives. They set high standards and expect staff to put the quality of

teaching and learning at the core of their work. For example, the deputy headteacher has a key role in supporting relatively inexperienced staff by modelling good practice. As a result, class management skills have improved noticeably.

All members of classroom staff contribute to evaluating the school's strengths and areas where improvement is possible. A rigorous programme of monitoring includes data analysis, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. This gives leaders an accurate picture of the school's life and work that informs a detailed improvement plan. The plan comprises action plans that support a manageable number of areas that align closely with national priorities. Progress towards priorities in previous plans has led to improvements in pupils' reading and numeracy test scores.

Arrangements for managing the performance of teachers satisfy statutory requirements and identify any additional training that will further staff's professional development. For example, many members of staff have benefited from programmes that support their delivery of the school's reading and phonics programme. The school is an established professional learning community. Teachers and teaching assistants benefit from frequent opportunities to learn from each other and from colleagues in other schools, and to attend external training events. For example, staff have benefited from activities that have improved their practice in teaching reading and writing and making best use of the outdoor learning areas.

The governing body conducts its regular meetings efficiently and detailed reports from the headteacher keep members well informed about the school's progress. A minority of members undertake learning walks with the headteacher and this gives them a sound understanding of aspects of the school's provision. For example, recent visits have enabled governors to monitor the provision for literacy and numeracy. However, following changes in personnel in recent years, the governing body now has a number of members with limited experience and this restricts their ability to offer robust challenge. Governors keep careful oversight of the school's finances. They ensure the adequate funding of school development priorities and keep levels of reserves within recommended limits.

There are enough teachers and support staff to deliver the curriculum, although they are not always deployed to best effect in promoting the principles of the foundation phase. Generally, the school has a good stock of books and equipment that is in good condition. However, the school recognises the need to increase its stock of computers. The fabric of the school is maintained well and, although most classrooms are small, they are brightly lit and decorated with displays that promote learning and celebrate pupils' good work. Several of the outdoor areas, including the forest school area, provide pupils with valuable opportunities to promote their curiosity, creativity and independence.

The school uses its specific grants efficiently to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals. This enables most to attain at the same level as other pupils.

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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