



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

A report on

**Ysgol Y Bannau
Penlan
Brecon
Powys
LD3 9SR**

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by

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

About Ysgol y Bannau

Ysgol y Bannau is situated on the outskirts of the town of Brecon in Powys. It is a designated Welsh-medium school that serves the wide rural area, in addition to the town.

There are currently 114 pupils on roll. Pupils are admitted to the school in the September following their fourth birthday. Pupils at Ysgol y Bannau are taught in four mixed-age classes.

Over the last three years, approximately 6% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. This is significantly lower than the national average of 19%. Many pupils state that they speak Welsh at home. The school has identified 17% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, which is lower than the national percentage of 21%. Welsh is the school's everyday language and the medium of teaching and learning.

The school was last inspected in 2011 and the current headteacher has been in post since 2007. The headteacher was not at the school at the time of the inspection. The acting headteacher has been responsible for the leadership and management of the school since October 2017.

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

The Welsh ethos is a strength and is at the heart of all of the school's work. Provision to develop the Welsh dimension is embedded firmly in the school's plans. Pupils are polite and very caring towards each other, and show pride when talking about their school.

Teachers provide a wide range of interesting learning experiences that promote pupils' enthusiasm. The principles of the foundation phase have been implemented robustly and develop pupils' skills well.

Over a period of time, the school's leadership and management have not been effective enough. Leaders have not acted strategically enough to ensure that the school's processes for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are sound. In a short period of time, the acting headteacher has begun to strengthen the school's processes. There is now effective co-operation between all members of the school's staff, which has led to creating a happy and supportive ethos for pupils.

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	Adequate and needs improvement
Leadership and management	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen leadership and ensure that leaders operate strategically
- R2 Strengthen self-evaluation processes in order to identify clear priorities for improvement, and monitor them more effectively
- R3 Improve processes for assessing and tracking pupils' progress
- R4 Raise standards of writing in Welsh
- R5 Improve the quality of teaching to respond fully to pupils' needs
- R6 Strengthen the role of governors to work more strategically and fulfil their statutory duties

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will produce an action plan to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress around 12 months after the publication of this report.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

On entry to the school, many pupils' basic skills are appropriate for their age. During their time at the school, many make sound progress from their starting points. They build effectively on previous learning and apply their thinking and problem-solving skills suitably across a range of areas of learning. Many pupils with additional learning needs make sound progress against their targets.

Across the school, most pupils listen attentively and talk confidently about their work, and use suitable syntax and vocabulary that is appropriate for their age and ability. In the foundation phase, most discuss their ideas clearly and enthusiastically, for example when talking about the story of Gelert as part of their theme work. Many pupils enjoy discussing books and make appropriate progress, and read meaningfully and with a relevant understanding of the text. A few more able pupils discuss the content of stories in detail, and refer to specific parts of the book when discussing their favourite character.

In key stage 2, most pupils talk about their work confidently in both languages. They respond enthusiastically to teachers' questions and explain their answers clearly. For example, they explain which strategies were used to calculate fractions in mathematics work, and describe the function of the digestive system in a science lesson. Many read appropriately in both languages and show a good awareness of audience. However, a majority of pupils have a weak understanding of what they read. At the end of key stage 2, a majority of pupils' higher order reading skills have not developed fully.

In the foundation phase, a majority of pupils develop their ideas sensibly, write clear sentences and spell basic vocabulary correctly, for example when writing a report of their visit to Dinefwr castle. A few more able pupils develop their independent writing skills, for example when writing a letter to Father Christmas to thank him for Christmas presents, but this has not been developed fully across the phase. Over-reliance on writing frames limits a majority of pupils' ability to write independently and at length. In key stage 2, a majority write in an appropriate range of forms confidently in both languages. A few pupils create imaginative pieces, for example when writing a letter to a local supermarket to ask for sponsorship for the school's breakfast club, and when writing an historical portrayal. However, a majority of pupils do not punctuate or paragraph their work consistently well.

In the foundation phase, many pupils make good progress in their mathematical skills in the learning areas. They handle money correctly and develop a sound understanding of place value and measurement. They use their numeracy skills suitably in a variety of activities, for example when calculating the cost of food for the class party. In key stage 2, most pupils have a sound understanding of number strategies and, by Year 6, they apply their numeracy skills to a good standard in various activities across the curriculum, for example when using the scale on a map to find the nearest adventure park to Brecon.

Many pupils across the school use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently for different purposes. In the foundation phase, many use control equipment confidently to create a path to the castle. They develop their skills well in data-handling activities, for example when creating graphs to record the birthdays of children in the class. In key stage 2, many use a word processor successfully, prepare presentations on the Second World War, and create purposeful pictures and posters. By the end of the stage, they create a variety of graphs confidently, for example to show the results of scientific experiments.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

The school is a supportive and inclusive learning community. Nearly all pupils enjoy the school's life and work, and feel safe within its caring and supportive ethos. Nearly all pupils behave well in lessons, assemblies and on the playground. They are polite and treat their peers, adults and visitors with respect.

They are caring towards each other. A notable example of this is the way in which the 'Gwenyn Gofal' (Care Bees) care for the youngest pupils during break times and lunchtime. Most pupils feel safe at school and know who to approach in they are concerned about anything.

Most pupils have good social and life skills. They show positive attitudes towards their work, concentrate well in lessons and work diligently for specific periods. Nearly all pupils work together effectively and respect the views and ideas of others. Many pupils have a suitable understanding of how they are achieving and what they need to do to improve their work. However, pupils' role in guiding their own learning and developing as independent learners within the class's work is limited. The 'criw mentrus' (enterprising crew) plays an active role in the school's work, for example when planning aprons with a Welsh emblem on them. This reinforces their entrepreneurship skills well. The school council, eco council and Criw Cymraeg play a suitable part in the school's life and work. An example of this is the way in which the Criw Cymraeg promotes the language by playing playground games.

Many pupils have a good awareness of fairness and tolerance, and are aware of the needs of others. For example, they raise money for local and national charities. This develops their awareness of others who are less fortunate. Pupils take part regularly in extra-curricular activities, for example by competing in eisteddfodau and local and national sports. This develops their role within the community and beyond successfully.

Most pupils show a positive attitude towards living and eating healthily. They understand the importance of making healthy choices and regular exercise. This is reinforced successfully in a suitable range of physical activities, for example rugby sessions and hockey lessons.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

The Welsh ethos is a strength and is at the heart of all of the school's work. Provision to develop the Welsh dimension has been embedded firmly in the school's plans. An example of this is the way in which pupils study Welsh castles as part of the class theme, and when analysing the work of the author and poet, T Llew Jones.

This is developed successfully through numerous visits within their local area and further afield, for example by visiting the botanical gardens. By studying folk stories and competing in eisteddfodau, pupils have a sound awareness of Welsh history and culture. Pupils are proud of their school and show pride in their community and language.

Teachers plan a wide range of activities and interesting learning opportunities for pupils, which ignite their enthusiasm. Numerous educational visits enrich learning effectively, for example a visit to Dinefwr castle as part of thematic work. The principles of the foundation phase have been implemented soundly and develop pupils' skills well. The foundation phase's outdoor areas are used purposefully in order to enrich pupils' learning experiences, for example as pupils prepare for Barti and Bel's party in the mud kitchen. In key stage 2, teachers plan interesting and practical experiences for pupils. They plan suitably to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. However, there is not a clear overview to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' skills development as they move through the school.

Although the school has suitable short-term plans, leaders do not monitor plans purposefully enough to ensure that activities respond fully to all pupils' needs. As a result, a few pupils do not make enough progress, for example in written work.

The quality of teaching is adequate and needs improvement. Staff treat pupils in a fair and balanced way and, as a result, pupils feel happy in their classes. Teachers have good subject knowledge and work effectively with assistants on the classroom floor to support individuals and specific groups of pupils. Staff manage pupils' behaviour effectively. They model language well, and this has a positive effect on pupils' standards of oracy. Where teaching is not as effective in a few cases, activities do not always challenge pupils in full. There is a tendency, at times, for teachers to over-direct learning. This limits pupils' ability to take responsibility for their own learning and to develop as independent learners.

Teachers provide pupils with suitable feedback on their work, which is useful and leads pupils to the next steps in their learning effectively. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to reflect on teachers' comments and improve their work. There are purposeful assessment processes in place, but teachers do not use assessment results purposefully enough to identify and plan the next steps in learning.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

Within a short period of time, the acting headteacher has established a good working relationship with parents. Newsletters that are shared regularly provide useful information for parents. This ensures parents' commitment to their children's learning. This is reinforced very effectively in termly meetings and curricular sessions for parents.

The school does not have effective enough systems to assess and track pupils' progress. Teachers use a limited range of assessments to identify pupils' strengths and areas for improvement. There are suitable intervention programmes in place to develop pupils' literacy skills, but these have not been operational over a period of time. These processes are not incisive enough to ensure purposeful intervention and

they do not lead to continuous improvement. However, teachers use a suitable range of assessments and internal and national tests to identify individuals and specific groups of pupils who need support. Targets within individual education plans are produced jointly by pupils and teachers. Progress is reviewed against the targets with parents regularly.

The school has suitable procedures for promoting eating and drinking healthily. The school organises valuable opportunities to develop pupils' wellbeing and fitness by working with dance groups and external agencies. Regular visits by the police to discuss issues relating to substances and e-safety, in addition to ICT lessons, develop pupils' awareness of staying safe on the internet. Provision to develop global citizenship is developed effectively through the school's schemes of work, for example by studying the life of Rosa Parks. This develops pupils' understanding of other cultures successfully.

The emphasis on developing values is prominent in the school's life. Aspects of equality, diversity and sustainability are developed purposefully through an effective personal and social education programme. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural attitudes are promoted successfully by studying the world's beliefs and through regular periods of collective worship.

The school promotes aspects of entrepreneurship well by planning and operating 'Siop Ffrwythau'r Bannau' (the school fruit shop) and selling aprons in a fashion show.

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

Leadership and management: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Over a period of time, the school's leadership and management have not been effective enough. Leaders have not acted strategically enough to ensure that the school's processes for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are robust enough. In a short period of time, the acting headteacher has started to strengthen the school's processes. There is now effective co-operation between all of the school's staff, which has led to creating a happy and supportive ethos for pupils. Staff are conscientious and fulfil their responsibilities appropriately. The acting headteacher works effectively with governors and parents to implement improvements. However, the school's long-term leadership is currently uncertain.

The acting headteacher has recently led the school through a period of instability and re-structuring classes. This has had a negative effect on staff morale, provision and standards, in addition to the school's ability to move forward. Teachers have an appropriate understanding of the school's performance data; however, this is inconsistent. As a result, leaders do not target individuals or challenge specific groups of pupils incisively enough to ensure improvement.

The school now has suitable systems to manage teachers' performance, with objectives that link suitably to the school's priorities for development. However, this has not been consistent over time. As a result, leaders have not fulfilled their statutory requirements fully. Over time, the school has not responded to staff's professional needs. The effect of this can be seen on provision and pupils' standards.

Under the leadership of the acting headteacher, and local authority and regional consortium staff, the school now has appropriate self-evaluation procedures that are based on evidence from teaching, learning and provision. However, over the last year, leaders have not monitored aspects of the school's work purposefully enough or acted on the limited monitoring findings.

The school responds purposefully to local and national priorities. For example, the school has begun to plan and prepare for implementing the digital competence framework. Over time, staff have not received training to coincide with the priorities in the school development plan or to develop them professionally.

Governors are very supportive of the acting headteacher, staff and the school's work. They meet regularly and now fulfil their duties conscientiously. Recently, they have a better understanding of the school's performance and how it compares with other similar schools. They have begun to undertake a variety of self-evaluation activities, but this has not been developed in full. The governors' role in challenging the school's leadership is limited.

Under the acting headteacher's leadership, the school's leaders manage the school budget more carefully after a difficult period of restructuring classes and staff responsibilities. Leaders monitor funding from the pupil development grant appropriately.

The school has a range of good quality resources. The accommodation provides an attractive learning environment. Pupils in the foundation phase make good use of the outdoor areas for learning and play.

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:

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