



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

A report on

**Ysgol Y Moelwyn
Heol Wynne
Blaenau Ffestiniog
Gwynedd
LL41 3DW**

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by

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

About Ysgol Y Moelwyn

Ysgol y Moelwyn is a naturally bilingual secondary school for pupils between 11 and 16 years old. It is situated in Blaenau Ffestiniog in Gwynedd. There has been a small decline in pupil numbers over the last three years, and there are now 313 pupils on roll.

Approximately 13% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the national figure of 17%. Thirty per cent (30%) of pupils are on the school's additional learning needs register, which is higher than the national average. Three per cent (3%) of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is slightly higher than the national figure.

Eighty one per cent (81%) of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. Very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds.

The headteacher has been in post since September 1997. In addition to his role as headteacher of the school, he is also currently acting as the strategic head for Ysgol y Berwyn in Bala. The school's senior management team includes the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.

The school is currently a pioneer school and is working with the Welsh Government and other schools to proceed with developments relating to the curriculum.

The school was last inspected in February 2014.

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 y Moelwyn is a caring school that plays a key part in its local community. Robust leadership has ensured a strong sense of pride and belonging among the school's pupils and staff. It has also led to high standards of wellbeing and good quality teaching. Most pupils behave excellently and many make valuable contributions to the school and the area through extra-curricular and charitable activities. Overall, many pupils make sound progress in many subjects. However, pupils do not make enough progress in the core subjects.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Improve standards, particularly in key stage 4 and English
- R2 Ensure that the leadership team's duties enable them to address improving standards in full
- R3 Ensure that leaders evaluate provision, particularly interventions, as a result of their effect on pupils' progress and achievement
- R4 Improve the quality of assessment, and ensure that teachers provide specific feedback and that pupils respond meaningfully to that feedback

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

In general, many pupils make sound progress in many subjects in terms of their skills, understanding and knowledge. However, in key stage 4, pupils' achievement in the indicators that include English or Welsh and mathematics has not compared favourably with the performance of pupils in similar schools over the last three years.

In many lessons, many pupils recall previous information successfully and apply their skills appropriately. In these lessons, pupils make sound progress.

Many pupils are eloquent and confident Welsh-speakers. They use rich dialect and lively, idiomatic Welsh. A majority of pupils are far less confident when speaking English. Many are keen to contribute to class discussions, for example when evaluating musical performances or gymnastics skills, and a majority use subject language correctly. Most pupils listen carefully and respectfully to each other and to others.

When reading, many pupils find information competently and come to sensible conclusions. In a few lessons, pupils interpret reading material creatively; for example, in Religious Education, they use the information that they gather from their reading tasks to create artwork. A majority of pupils implement useful reading strategies, but a minority have difficulty completing reading tasks independently. Overall, a majority of pupils interpret various texts suitably and a few do so skilfully and sensitively in Welsh and English. However, a majority of pupils do not make enough use of terminology when interpreting texts in English.

Many pupils produce suitable extended written work for a variety of purposes, and organise their work logically, such as writing about famous artists in art. A majority show a clear understanding of audience and form, for example when writing portrayals of members of their family in Welsh. Many have sound, natural vocabulary and syntax when writing in Welsh. A few have a rich, wide vocabulary and write very accurately. However, a minority use English words and slang in their Welsh written work. When writing in English, a minority of pupils have appropriate vocabulary and a sound grasp of syntax. However, many misspell common words frequently and make numerous grammatical errors. A majority have vocabulary that is too limited and the register of their work is too informal at times.

Many pupils calculate and treat equations correctly, in general, although there are some errors in terms of expression and methodology in a few cases. A majority make effective and correct use of graphs, and complete mental calculations confidently. In a few relevant subjects, they apply their numeracy skills appropriately.

Pupils develop their information and communication technology skills appropriately in a few subjects across the curriculum; for example, they use spreadsheets to calculate and analyse results of questionnaires in their mathematics lessons.

Pupils' creativity is a strong feature. There are numerous examples of pupils developing their creative skills across a range of subjects; for example, some pupils

have produced a book of writing and art work with a local writer. They also develop their physical skills effectively and a number of pupils have been successful in national and international gymnastics competitions over a number of years.

Performance in the level 2 indicator including English or Welsh and mathematics has improved over the last three years. However, this performance is consistently lower than in other similar schools, and pupils do not make sufficient progress from the end of key stage 2 to key stage 4 in this indicator. Over the same period, performance in the capped points score has been consistently sound and compares favourably with the performance of other similar schools.

The proportion of pupils who have gained five GCSEs grade A*-A or equivalent has varied over time, but has improved significantly in 2017.

In the indicators that include five GCSEs grade A*-C and A*-G or equivalent, and in many non-core subjects, the performance of boys and girls over the last three years has been strong. Their performance in Welsh is also sound, in general. However, in the indicator that includes five GCSEs grade A*-C or equivalent including Welsh or English and mathematics, girls' performance is consistently lower than that of girls in similar schools. Over time, their performance is also lower in English and mathematics. Boys' performance is consistently lower than that of boys in similar schools in English.

The performance of a small number of pupils who are eligible for free schools meals varies. Their performance has been strong over time in the indicators that include five GCSEs grade A*-C and A*-G or equivalent, but it has not been as good in the indicators that include Welsh or English and mathematics.

Overall, pupils with additional learning needs make sound progress.

At the end of Year 11, nearly all pupils continue in education, training or employment.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Positive attitudes towards school life are a particular feature of pupils at Ysgol y Moelwyn. Most concentrate well and persevere when they face difficulties. They apply themselves fully to new and unfamiliar experiences and ideas.

Standards of wellbeing at the school are high. Most pupils are warm and welcoming towards visitors and interact maturely with adults. They show very high levels of respect towards other pupils and staff.

Most pupils enjoy coming to school and greatly appreciate the rich offer of learning experiences and extra-curricular activities. Most behave excellently during lessons and around the school. They arrive at lessons punctually and settle quickly.

Most pupils feel safe at school. They know who to approach if they need support and feel that the school responds to any concerns in a timely and effective manner.

In class discussions, pupils make a valuable contribution, respect other people's contributions and are considerate of different points of view. Most work effectively in groups and pairs and show increasing maturity, becoming confident and independent learners.

Pupils are very willing to undertake leadership roles and responsibilities. They participate fully in the school's life and work, for example as members of the school council, year council, pupil forums and the pupil's voice sub-committee. In addition, older pupils help younger pupils with their reading and numeracy skills.

Many pupils develop very successfully as ethical and tolerant citizens. Pupils of all ages are very active in organising charitable and humanitarian activities; for example, they make valuable contributions to the local community by organising a monthly lunch for the elderly and by cleaning litter from the river. They also raise money for local and national causes, such as Children in Need and Operation Christmas Child, and collect goods for refugees. As a result, the school plays a very important role in the area and is a great asset to community life and Blaenau Ffestiniog and the surrounding area.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of how to keep healthy through diet and exercise. Pupils make a beneficial contribution towards ensuring that the canteen provides healthy food, and develop valuable healthy eating habits.

A very high proportion of pupils take part in the wide variety of extra-curricular activities, including climbing, adventure biking and canoeing clubs.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The quality of teaching at the school is good.

In many lessons, teachers use a range of beneficial activities and resources to engage pupils' interest successfully. These lessons are planned purposefully, and activities build effectively on each other. In a few lessons, planning is creative; for example, in Welsh lessons, contemporary music is used as a successful catalyst for thematic work.

Teachers and assistants have strong and constructive relationships with nearly all pupils. As a result, pupils are well-behaved in nearly all lessons, and behaviour is exceptional in a majority of lessons. In most cases, assistants are skilful when providing effective support for pupils with additional learning needs. Most classrooms are stimulating spaces with beneficial resources that support lessons effectively.

In many lessons, teachers have high expectations of their pupils. In these lessons, activities challenge pupils suitably. In a few particularly effective lessons, activities provide a beneficial challenge for all pupils across the range of ability. However, in a few lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations and activities do not challenge pupils sufficiently.

A majority of teachers give clear instructions and explain effectively.

However, in a few cases, teachers do not model work in enough detail or with enough accuracy. As a result, pupils do not make appropriate progress in these lessons.

Many teachers question pupils appropriately, and a few ask specific questions that challenge individual pupils effectively. A majority of teachers provide beneficial

feedback that gives pupils effective guidance on how to improve their work. A minority of teachers' comments are too superficial and overly complimentary, and they do not provide purposeful targets to ensure improvement. In general, when teachers ask for a response to feedback, only in a minority of cases do pupils do so meaningfully.

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

The school provides a comprehensive programme of support and experiences that promote pupils' progress and motivation successfully; for example, visits to cultural organisations across the country and abroad. Pupils also take part in a variety of special projects, such as working with a local author and artist to produce an impressive booklet, 'Strach y Wrach a'r Cathod'. There is a useful programme of work-related education, including two periods of beneficial work experience with local employers for all pupils in Year 10.

The school has planned carefully to interweave the requirements of the literacy and numeracy framework in order to develop pupils' skills across the curriculum suitably. There are beneficial experiences to develop pupils' Welsh literacy. In particular, the firm focus on developing oracy has nurtured eloquent Welsh-speakers. However, opportunities to strengthen pupils' English literacy skills are less effective. Purposeful and systematic plans have begun to provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum. The school's ICT provision is developing and has good aspects.

The school has a robust vision to develop Welsh people who are proud of their Welsh heritage. A series of valuable activities are provided that give pupils opportunities to learn more about their Welsh heritage and culture, for example the arts pioneer schools project and the school's very prominent part in commemorating the recent centenary of the death of Hedd Wyn. The school has begun to introduce beneficial activities across departments to promote pupils' bilingualism. However, they have not yet been successful enough in ensuring that they are confident bilingual communicators.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a close-knit community that provides encouraging and caring support to its pupils. This inclusive and supportive ethos promotes pupils' health, wellbeing and progress very successfully. Pupils behave exceptionally and show respect towards each other and other people.

The school provides valuable support for pupils with additional learning needs. Provision for them ensures full access to the school curriculum, where appropriate, and enables them to make sound progress. Good use is made of support staff to provide effective support for these pupils.

The school conducts purposeful annual reviews for pupils with additional learning needs, and pupils contribute towards setting their personal targets.

There is a variety of useful interventions for pupils with specific behavioural needs. They have helped these pupils to improve their behaviour, wellbeing and personal skills significantly. Provision in the inclusion (nurture) room, 'Ystafell Stwlan', provides beneficial support for vulnerable pupils.

The school has an effective progress-tracking system. In general, beneficial use is made of this information to identify pupils who are in need of support and provide intervention for them. However, the school is not incisive enough when evaluating the effect and suitability of all interventions.

Effective strategies are used to track and monitor attendance, and there are successful procedures to promote attendance. Support staff provide consistent and robust support for those pupils who are in most need.

The school communicates well with parents, including use of electronic methods to communicate with them about homework. Comprehensive interim and end-of-year reports, and regular parents' evenings, provide valuable information for parents.

Pupils benefit from numerous opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities and clubs, for example musical performance and local sports competitions. Pupils also undertake various roles enthusiastically, which develop them as active citizens. They organise valuable community activities, such as tea for the elderly and a Pink Evening to raise money for a breast cancer charity.

A comprehensive personal and social education programme contributes effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school works effectively with external agencies in order to provide beneficial experiences for pupils, for example focus days on themes such as mental health and domestic violence.

The school council contributes effectively to improvements, including broadening the choice of health foods and changing the furniture in the canteen. It has made a valuable contribution to community enterprises, such as Antur Stiniog and developments on the high street.

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

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher has a clear vision that is based on providing equal opportunities and rich experiences in a Welsh environment for all of the school's pupils. He succeeds in conveying and sharing this vision with conviction with all of the school's stakeholders. This leads to a strong sense of community pride. Robust leadership has ensured high quality teaching and a supportive and caring ethos that provides a stable and happy environment. The school has also responded strongly to many national priorities, for example promoting Welsh language and culture and reducing the effect of deprivation.

Most leadership roles and responsibilities are distributed sensibly and there are clear lines of accountability. There is a programme of regular meetings that focus appropriately on the school's priorities. Many minutes from these meetings include useful action points and sensible continuity from one meeting to the next. However, the current duties of the only two members of the senior leadership team limit their time to address raising standards in full.

Many middle managers understand their roles and responsibilities in full, and they are aware of what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. The school dedicates itself beneficially to developing the staff's leadership skills through a local strategic partnership.

Members of the governing body are very supportive of the school and have a sound understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They have useful links with specific departments and an appropriate awareness of the main strengths and areas for improvement.

The school has a robust quality assurance programme that provides an effective basis for its processes for self-evaluation and planning for improvement. This programme is implemented consistently across the school. It is based on appropriate evidence, which includes, for the most part, regular opportunities to reflect on lessons and scrutinise books. However, the school is not always incisive enough when evaluating provision according to its effect on standards and pupils' achievement.

The self-evaluation report is a detailed document and identifies the main strengths and areas for improvement accurately. It includes a useful statistical analysis of pupils' achievement over the last four years. However, this analysis is not always probing enough. For example, it does not explain the decline in the school's performance during the recent period, and does not place enough emphasis on comparing the school's performance with that of other similar schools during the same period.

There is a clear, logical link between self-evaluation processes and planning the school's priorities for improvement. On the whole, development priorities are relevant and include appropriate success criteria.

The school has varied and relevant arrangements to support staff development. Staff benefit from beneficial opportunities to share good practice with each other and across schools in Meirionnydd, in particular. The school has addressed underperformance in the recent period effectively.

Performance management objectives link appropriately with whole-school priorities. However, performance management targets are not measurable enough to hold members of staff to account effectively.

The headteacher and governors manage resources and expenditure very carefully. They make sure that there is a close link between decisions on expenditure and the school's strategic priorities. Provision and class sizes are monitored carefully to ensure a positive effect on school life and pupils' wellbeing. The school makes beneficial use of grants to support the achievement of the school's most vulnerable 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.

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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