



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

A report on

**Ysgol Brynaerau
Pontllyfni
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
LL54 5BU**

Date of inspection: March 2019

by

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

About Ysgol Brynaerau

Ysgol Gymuned Brynaerau is situated in a rural area, around half a mile from the village of Pontllyfni, on the main road between Caernarfon and Pwllheli. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work. There are 64 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including 8 part-time nursery age pupils. They are divided into 3 mixed-age classes.

Over the last three years, around 9% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. This is significantly lower than the national percentage (18%). Around 70% of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. Very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The school has identified 22% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, which is similar to the national percentage of 21%.

The headteacher was appointed to the post in January 2016. She is responsible for another nearby school and divides her time between the two schools. The school was last inspected in July 2013.

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

During their time at the school, nearly all pupils make very sound progress and apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills highly successfully in a range of different creative and integrated activities. Nearly all pupils' standards of wellbeing, behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. They show high levels of motivation, interest and pride in their work.

An emphasis is placed on respect and courtesy between pupils, and between pupils and adults, in a caring, supporting and Welsh environment. This is an excellent feature of the school's work, which contributes extensively towards its effective learning environment. Teachers provide a stimulating, creative and practical curriculum, which engages nearly all pupils' interest and ignites their imagination. Exciting learning experiences and adventures motivate and support pupils very successfully. Pupils are given a prominent voice in guiding their learning. As a result, they enjoy attending every day, persevere with their tasks and develop as ambitious, confident and independent learners.

The headteacher and assistant headteacher provide highly effective leadership and a clear strategic direction for the school's work. A culture of improvement permeates the school, and continuous review and planning for improvement are at the heart of the school's ethos. A particular feature is the strong emphasis on staff development. This leads to a strong learning community in which staff face changes and current developments in education enthusiastically and confidently, and learn from each other very effectively.

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

Recommendations

R1 Create more opportunities for teachers to investigate and evaluate the effect of the new curriculum on pupils' outcomes

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study, to be disseminated on Estyn's website, about its work in relation to the effect of a stimulating creative and practical curriculum on pupils' standards and independence.

Main findings

Standards: Excellent

During their time at the school, nearly all pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make very sound progress, achieve well and work independently. They perform at outcomes and levels that at least correspond with what is expected, and a majority exceed this progress. They apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills highly successfully in a range of different creative and integrated activities.

Most pupils take pride in the Welsh language and use it naturally when talking to each other. The Welsh oral skills of the few pupils who come from non-Welsh-speaking homes develop very quickly. By Year 2, nearly all pupils discuss their tasks with increasing confidence, and use extensive and correct vocabulary, for example when discussing how they can reduce litter in the environment. Most pupils in key stage 2 contribute effectively to group discussions, for example when planning an imaginative story jointly. They discuss their work intelligently in Welsh and English, and change freely from one language to the other, for example when discussing their campaign to collect money for the Wales Air Ambulance charity.

Most pupils' reading skills are developing very well across the school. Most develop early reading skills quickly and gain confidence while enjoying rich activities. They have sound phonic skills when reading unfamiliar words. By the end of the foundation phase, most are skilful readers. Most pupils in key stage 2 read intelligently and maturely in both languages. They make highly effective use of their skills to gather information from books and various texts, and from appropriate websites, to enrich their work across the curriculum, for example when researching the pyramids.

Most pupils in the foundation phase develop their writing skills effectively. From the outset, they record letter, phrases and simple words and develop confidence quickly. By Year 2, most develop as creative and skilful writers, for example when creating clear and concise descriptions of a trip to the top of Bryn Dinas. Across key stage 2, most pupils structure their work correctly in Welsh and English, and show a sound grasp of syntax and punctuation. By Year 6, most pupils write maturely in a wide range of contexts and produce work of a high standard, for example when comparing the differences between medical services in Gwynedd and India. Many create imaginative, creative pieces and use effects and similes very successfully to enrich their work, for example when creating a monologue by a quarryman by using a local artist's pictures as a prompt.

Most pupils across the school have sound numeracy skills. An excellent feature is their ability to transfer their skills in a variety of contexts very skilfully across the curriculum. Most pupils in the foundation phase show a good understanding of number facts and apply them confidently in new situations, for example when completing a challenge to create a necklace. In key stage 2, nearly all pupils have extremely sound numeracy skills, and more able pupils achieve very highly. Most pupils gather, analyse and present information and data very skilfully in different forms to support their work across the curriculum, for example when creating a fact file about different countries.

Across the school, pupils make very effective use of the full range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills to support their work in areas of learning and across the curriculum. Nearly all pupils in the foundation phase use a range of programs very confidently, which enriches learning effectively. In key stage 2, nearly all pupils make mature choices about which equipment to use to complete specific tasks. They apply their ICT skills to a high standard across the curriculum, for example when creating multimedia presentations of the function of different body organs. They create, analyse and interpret databases intelligently to support their work, for example about the Three Peaks Challenge. An exceptional feature of their work is their skilful and artistic use of a wide range of programs to create interesting and creative films to a very high standard.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Nearly all pupils' standards of wellbeing and attitudes to learning are excellent. Pupils' standards of behaviour and self-discipline in lessons, and around the school, are exceptionally good. Nearly all pupils show motivation in their work and apply themselves to tasks and challenges diligently and enthusiastically. This contributes successfully to the very effective ethos of learning within the school and has a positive effect on pupils' standards and wellbeing. The strength of the working relationships between pupils and staff is an exceptional feature of the school's work. By contributing to planning creative and practical themes in areas across the curriculum, most pupils are committed and motivated to learn successfully. They have a direct influence on the activities they will complete, and make very confident decisions and choices about what they would like to learn. They choose challenging learning pathways in order to complete extended tasks.

By using a variety of effective strategies, nearly all pupils gain some of the essential skills needed to learn effectively, and show a willingness to embrace new experiences. Pupils excel at supporting each other. This is reflected in their enthusiastic response to the 'three before me' strategy, which motivates them to work independently and suggest different ways of solving problems or improving their work to their peers. As a result, they develop to become ambitious, keen and confident learners. Nearly all pupils realise the importance of perseverance and that mistakes are a natural part of the learning process. From an early age, most pupils have a good understanding of how to improve their work. At the top of the school, they show maturity when evaluating what they have achieved, and identify what they need to do to progress their learning.

Nearly all pupils are very happy and enjoy the whole life of the school. They all feel safe there and feel that they are valued and respected. Nearly all pupils treat each other, staff and visitors very politely, and show great pride in their school, their community and their Welshness. They are exceptionally caring towards each other and show great respect towards others in lessons, in the dining hall and on the school playground. The positive interaction and strong levels of co-operation between pupils of all ages, during work and play, are a strong feature of the school. A good example of this is the mature way in which older pupils, who are members of the Welsh Language Charter Crew and sports ambassadors, care for others during break times and lunchtime.

Across the school, many pupils fulfil their leadership roles and responsibilities as members of the school council, green school, healthy school and digital wizards, conscientiously. Members understand that they give their fellow pupils a prominent voice and enable them to have a positive effect on school life and the wellbeing of their peers. They participate very enthusiastically in a range of activities. A notable example of their contribution is planning and leading on priorities in the school development plan. They contribute extensively by raising money for charities and contributing towards local organisations. This has a positive effect on their understanding of the needs of others, in addition to developing a sense of pride in their close-knit community. As a result, they develop as knowledgeable and moral citizens.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily, and the importance of regular physical exercise. Nearly all pupils improve their fitness by taking part in a wide range of physical activities during lessons, break time and through extra-curricular activities. The digital wizards are active in reminding their fellow pupils about the rules of the internet. As a result, nearly all pupils have a sound awareness of the importance of staying safe online. Nearly all pupils are very aware of the importance of attending school regularly.

Teaching and learning experiences: Excellent

Through very effective co-operation, teachers have created a stimulating, creative and practical curriculum that engages nearly all pupils' interest and ignites their imagination. They provide exciting learning experiences and adventures for pupils, which motivate and support them very successfully. Teachers have responded very enthusiastically to adapting the curriculum to meet the purposes of the new curriculum for Wales. Learning experiences enable pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding highly successfully across the curriculum and in an integrated manner. This has a very positive effect on pupils' attitudes to learning. By including the pupil's voice in planning, teachers provide valuable opportunities for them to play an active part in guiding their learning. This ensures that most pupils build successfully on previous learning experiences and strengthens their commitment to their work very effectively. A range of imaginative and challenging activities is used, which nurtures pupils' independence very effectively. As a result, pupils have the confidence to try and to think for themselves.

Across the school, staff forge an excellent working relationship with pupils, which nurtures a supportive and stimulating learning environment and ensures that pupils achieve in line with their ability. Teachers know the pupils very well and provide them with effective support while their work and interact with their peers. They make very effective use of various successful teaching methods, which ensures that nearly all pupils apply themselves fully to their learning. Foundation phase provision is embedded firmly in the school. There is a good balance between experiences that are led by adults and opportunities for pupils to make decisions about their learning. Staff make flexible use of the school's resources and include pupils' ideas effectively when organising the learning areas, including the outdoor areas.

Imaginative presentations and the pace of lessons are a strong feature of teaching in key stage 2. An excellent example of this is the work of pupils in Years 3 and 4 when planning how to escape from King Tut's tomb. Teachers have very high

expectations. They question skilfully in order to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding and, at times, challenge them to think and reason their answers at a higher level. They use open-ended questions very successfully in order to encourage pupils to think independently. An excellent example of this is the work of older pupils when responding to the question 'Can one person change the world?'. All of this stimulates pupils' interest and enthusiasm in their learning, and ensures that they apply themselves fully to their work.

Pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are developed naturally as an integral part of planning. As a result, most pupils transfer and apply their skills confidently in all areas of learning. There is a very strong Welsh ethos, and provision encourages pupils to make full use of the Welsh language in all aspects of school life. Staff model polished spoken language, which has a positive effect on pupils' oral Welsh skills. As a result, pupils develop as competent and confident bilingual learners. Teachers plan very effectively to develop a curriculum that is based on Wales and Welsh heritage. This contributes successfully to pupils' understanding of their local area, their history and their culture. An excellent example is pupils' enthusiasm when discussing a mural of the Nantlle Valley on the garden wall.

Teachers provide pupils with robust feedback in order for them to make improvements and develop their work further. Staff intervene sensitively to support pupils at appropriate times during the lesson, for example to encourage them to check their progress against lesson objectives and success criteria. Pupils are given regular opportunities to reflect on their work and make improvements.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The quality of care and guidance that are provided by the school is exceptionally good. The school is a highly caring and friendly community that promotes the importance of Welshness, courtesy, respect and 'trying our very best' very effectively. This contributes very effectively to pupils' positive attitudes to their work and the school's inclusive ethos. Staff's commitment to introducing strategies that raise pupils' confidence and develop their resilience contributes highly effectively towards ensuring that nearly all pupils flourish, develop self-confidence and infectious enthusiasm, and take pride in their achievements. As a result, pupils have the confidence to try, and develop as ambitious, keen and independent learners. All members of staff have very high expectations in terms of pupils' behaviour, effort and wellbeing. This is evident in the way in which pupils treat each other.

Provision to develop pupils' creative and expressive skills is a strong feature of the school's work. Staff provide valuable opportunities to develop pupils' imaginative experiences, for example by working with a dance company to develop pupils' dance and drama skills. An excellent feature of their work is the performance of a very high standard in a local theatre, based on work from various countries. Staff organise regular opportunities for pupils to compete successfully in eisteddfodau and perform in concerts in their local area during the year. All of the very valuable experiences that are provided for pupils contribute very positively towards preparing them to become confident, independent and mature citizens, and give an additional boost to their desire to learn.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development very successfully. The caring attention that staff give to considering the pupil's voice contributes very effectively to opportunities for pupils to shoulder responsibility and make sensible decisions about their learning. Pupils are keen and confident when choosing challenging adventures to complete. Staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to shoulder responsibility and become active citizens by taking part in influential voice of the child groups, such as the school council. This develops pupils' leadership skills effectively, for example by organising the 'Three Peaks Challenge' to raise money for the Wales Air Ambulance charity.

The school has effective and thorough procedures for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress and wellbeing. This helps staff to identify any pupils who need support or additional challenge quickly, and provide for them. They develop and implement effective programmes that engage pupils' interest and aim to meet their needs. Caring support for pupils enables them to make sound and consistent progress. Learning assistants have detailed knowledge of pupils' targets, and support all pupils very conscientiously. The individual education plans of pupils with additional learning needs are concise and clear. Plans are reviewed regularly jointly with pupils and their parents, and are adapted purposefully, where necessary.

There is a highly supportive relationship between parents, the community and the school. Parents are informed regularly about the school's activities and events, and regular progress meetings are held in order to share information and reinforce what parents can do to support their children with their work. As a result, parents have valuable involvement in their child's education. The school listens to parents' views and responds to their ideas supportively. The parent teacher association supports this successfully, as it raises money to purchase resources, such as technological equipment and to develop the outdoor area. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to study the environment as part of their class work.

The school has robust procedures for promoting eating and drinking healthily. For example, parents have received information about how to create healthy lunchboxes, and the healthy schools council promotes healthy food and eating fruit during break time across the school. As a result, most pupils have good knowledge of what they need to do to stay healthy. Beneficial opportunities, in addition to a range of purposeful outdoor resources for exercise sessions and sports clubs, contribute successfully to pupils' wellbeing.

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

Leadership and management: Excellent

The headteacher and assistant headteacher provide innovative and robust leadership, and set a clear strategic direction for developing the school. They have very high expectations and both are very passionate about the community that they serve. They are highly effective in setting and promoting a vision for the school, which focuses on Welshness, courtesy, kindness and 'trying our very best'. They share this vision very successfully with all staff, pupils, parents and governors, which leads successfully to high expectations of clear educational values and ambitious objectives for all pupils.

The willingness of the headteacher and all staff to face changes and current developments in education with confidence and creativity is an excellent feature. As a result, the school's response to achieving national and local priorities is a strength, and contributes to very high standards of teaching and learning. For example, teachers have adapted provision to establish a new curriculum for Wales by creating a stimulating, creative and practical curriculum that engages nearly all pupils' interest and ignites their imagination. Agreed teaching strategies have been established with a prominent emphasis on ensuring that pupils play an active part in their learning. As a result, pupils are keen to complete tasks to a high level and take pride in, and ownership of, their work. The response to establishing the Digital Competence Framework and promoting the Welsh language across the school has also led exceptionally successfully to high standards among pupils.

The headteacher allocates responsibilities very effectively, and members of staff respond very enthusiastically when developing areas and aspects of learning in order to raise pupils' standards. Staff's roles and responsibilities have been defined clearly and promote high quality teamwork. The school has extremely robust performance management arrangements, and the headteacher promotes staff's professional development skilfully by linking training priorities with priorities for improvement within the school development plan. This has led to a strong teaching community, in which staff learn and develop with each other very effectively. Joint training with local schools adds well to staff's professional development. By planning jointly with two other schools, there are valuable opportunities for staff to evaluate the quality of teaching, and identify the effect of their work on standards. The headteacher shared the school's good practice by leading courses for teachers within the authority on tracking pupils' progress and setting challenging targets that are linked to pupils' targets.

A culture of improvement permeates the school, and continuous review and planning for improvement are at the heart of the school's ethos. Self-evaluation arrangements are successful and focus clearly on standards and the effect of provision on pupils' outcomes. First-hand evidence from a wide range of sources contributes effectively to the process, and focuses on extending pupils' standards. As a result, all staff have rigorous knowledge of the school and succeed in ensuring continuous and sustainable improvements. Support staff provide robust support and have a significant effect on the development and attainment of specific groups of pupils. Priorities in the development plan focus directly on the outcomes of the self-evaluation process and are used regularly to measure and identify progress. A good example of this is the way in which the school has improved assessment for learning practices in order to ensure that pupils receive more effective feedback on their work. Pupils are given a prominent voice within the evaluation process, and play a core part in setting priorities for improvement, for example by wishing to learn more about their local area, and developing the school garden. As a result, pupils have been given a valuable opportunity to create an attractive mural of the Snowdonia Mountains, which decorates the garden wall. These activities succeed in nurturing creative skills of a high standard among pupils.

Members of the governing body have rigorous knowledge of the school's performance. They are dedicated and their regular visits enable them to play an active part in evaluating progress against priorities for improvement. This enables them to hold the school to account and helps to set a clear strategic direction to

develop the school as an effective learning community. They manage and monitor the budget carefully, and the school has purposeful resources, such as ICT equipment, that succeed in extending valuable opportunities for teaching and learning. The school uses the pupil development grant effectively to improve standards of literacy.

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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