



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 Felin
Penymaes Road
Holywell
Flintshire
CH8 7EN**

Date of inspection: November 2019

by

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

About Ysgol Maes Y Felin

Ysgol y Felin Primary School is in Holywell in the Flintshire local authority. The school was formed after the amalgamation of Perth y Terfyn Infants School and Ysgol Y Fron in 2016.

There are 315 pupils, including 28 part-time nursery pupils. There are 13 mixed-age classes and a local authority specialist teaching facility (called a social communication resource) for children with autism spectrum disorder.

The three-year rolling average of pupils eligible for free school meals is around 36%. This is well above the Wales average of 18%. The school states that around 30% of pupils have special educational needs, this is well above the Wales average of 21%. Most pupils are of white British ethnicity and a very few pupils speak Welsh at home.

The headteacher was appointed in September 2016. This is the school's first Estyn inspection.

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

Throughout their time at the school, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress in their learning and achieve well. Pupils who arrive in school with little or no English make at least good progress from their individual starting points. Most pupils who attend the social communication resource make good progress over time in line with their needs and abilities.

Nearly all pupils display high levels of respect and tolerance towards one another, staff and visitors. They behave well, moving around the school and their classes calmly and responsibly. Teachers across the school provide pupils with learning experiences of good quality that engage pupils' interests well and develop their skills and curiosity successfully.

There is an effective team spirit in the school and all staff collaborate well to share their knowledge and understanding for the benefit of the pupils. The school nurtures a calm learning environment where the relationship between staff and pupils supports learning effectively. The partnership with the local community is a particular strength of the school. The headteacher and governors provide effective leadership for the school and they set a clear strategic direction for the future development of the school successfully.

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

Recommendations

R1 Improve pupils' oral Welsh skills in key stage 2

R2 Improve the effectiveness of teachers' feedback to pupils on their work so they have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve their skills

R3 Improve attendance

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

Throughout their time at the school, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress in their learning and achieve well. Pupils who arrive in school with little or no English make at least good progress from their individual starting points. Most pupils who attend the social communication resource make good progress over time in line with their needs and abilities. They make sound progress in terms of achieving their own targets for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT).

By the end of foundation phase, many pupils speak accurately and fluently. They are happy to discuss their learning with one another and with adults confidently. For example, they speak enthusiastically about how they record their numbers after throwing a large dice in an outdoor setting. At the end of key stage 2, most pupils have the age-appropriate skills to communicate well. They use these purposefully in their lessons when explaining their thoughts and ideas. For example, pupils make effective use of a digital gnome to record their voice as part of a class plenary session. Across the school, nearly all pupils listen well to adults and to each other. Nearly all pupils in the foundation phase express their ideas and opinions enthusiastically and respond to questions confidently. Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 use a good range of vocabulary effectively to discuss aspects of their work. This supports their learning well.

Most pupils in the foundation phase enjoy reading and are developing their reading skills effectively. They enjoy reading to others. By Year 2, many pupils read with confidence and fluency and they show a good understanding of the content and context of a suitable range of different books. In key stage 2, most pupils read a wide range of texts fluently, accurately and with good expression. They retrieve specific information accurately, for example when researching for information about famous Victorian inventors, such as Sir Humphry Davy.

Across the school, nearly all pupils write successfully to communicate for a suitable range of purposes, both in literacy lessons and in other area of learning. In the foundation phase, pupils' writing skills develop well. By Year 2, most pupils produce informative and imaginative writing, for example when undertaking factual writing based on the story of The Gruffalo. In key stage 2, most pupils write well. They plan their writing effectively using a wide range of strategies and are beginning to produce pieces of extended writing of good quality, for example when writing a prayer and acrostic poem based on Remembrance Day. By Year 6, most pupils are thoughtful writers whether in literacy lessons or in other subjects. They produce impressive and imaginative writing. For example, when creating a diary based on Queen Victoria's coronation day, they use suitable adjectives, and details based on researched facts and imaginative conversations. However, many pupils are not as accurate in their spelling and use of punctuation as they could be.

Across the foundation phase, most pupils make good progress in mathematics. By the end of the phase, many pupils work confidently with number and perform age-appropriate calculations using both practical and written methods. For example,

when using a recipe for bread, pupils count and record how many teaspoons of ingredients they put into dough confidently. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils have secure number skills and work well when exploring the relationship between multiplication and division. Many use mathematical language well and show they can link their numeracy skills purposefully with real-life situations, such as calculating the difference in airfares from Manchester to Patagonia.

Nearly all pupils develop a suitable range of ICT skills as they move through school. Foundation phase pupils use tablet devices well to take photographs and they create simple charts effectively using Hwb. Older pupils use the internet successfully to research their topic on dinosaurs. In key stage 2, pupils search for information from a variety of sources and present their findings appropriately. They demonstrate strong skills using word processing and spreadsheets. For example, the pupils created tables and charts following a science investigation on paper aeroplanes.

Nearly all pupils have a positive attitude to learning and speaking Welsh. In the foundation phase, most pupils make steady progress in developing basic communication skills in Welsh. They respond appropriately to a range of instructions, and they ask and answer simple questions confidently. In key stage 2, most pupils' writing skills develop appropriately when they use a set framework, for example to write about themselves and their likes and dislikes. However, many pupils in key stage 2 lack confidence in speaking Welsh in less formal situations outside Welsh lessons and use limited words and phrases. The majority of pupils do not read texts fluently enough or with accurate pronunciation.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils enjoy school, feel safe and have a very positive attitude to learning. They display high levels of respect and tolerance towards one another, staff and visitors. Nearly all pupils behave well, moving around the school and their classes calmly and responsibly. Most pupils help each other and the way the older pupils consider younger pupils demonstrates their care and concern strongly. For example, playground buddies set out play equipment and sort out minor disagreements well.

Nearly all pupils have a strong understanding of how to make healthy lifestyle choices, for example when purchasing fruit at playtimes. They appreciate and engage purposefully in the wide range of extra-curricular activities that the school provides, including outdoor games, art, chess and construction blocks. Older pupils have a clear understanding of online safety and how to be good digital citizens. Most pupils have a sound understanding of their rights and responsibilities from their work on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Most pupils play an active part in school life and their role in decision-making is well developed. Many pupils provide effective leadership through active participation in pupil voice groups. Digital leaders, school council, eco team and criw Cymraeg have a strong impact on significant aspects of the school's life and work.

Most pupils engage enthusiastically with their learning. They take advantage of the opportunities provided by staff to express their ideas about what they want to learn. For example, younger pupils in the foundation phase suggest ideas for their 'Food and Festivals' project. This results in pupils showing high levels of involvement and

interest in their work. Nearly all are proud of their school work and pupils demonstrate resilience when addressing and working through tasks, and they know where to turn if they need support.

Most pupils are punctual at the start of the school day and arrive at school ready to begin learning. Many pupils understand the importance of regular attendance and respond well to the school's wide range of initiatives to improve levels of attendance. Despite the school's exhaustive efforts, the attendance rate overall remains too low relative to that in other similar schools, mainly due to the persistent absence of a very small number of pupils.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The school provides a rich and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of mainstream pupils and those in the social communication resource well. Teachers across the school provide pupils learning experiences of good quality that engage pupils' interests well and develop their skills and curiosity successfully.

All members of staff have an effective working relationship with pupils, which fosters a positive and supportive environment for learning. They manage pupils' behaviour effectively and, as a result, nearly all pupils are attentive and support one another well in their learning. Respect between pupils and adults is a particularly strong feature of the school's work.

Teachers generally have high expectations of each pupil and they make effective use of a variety of stimulating teaching methods to engage pupils' interests successfully. Nearly all teachers' presentations are lively, explain the shared learning objectives clearly and encourage pupils to achieve as well as they can. Teachers set a brisk pace of learning and use questioning techniques carefully to develop pupils' thinking skills and to check their understanding.

Learning support staff throughout the school contribute very effectively to supporting teachers in improving standards in pupils' learning. There is an effective team spirit in the school and all staff collaborate well to share their knowledge and understanding for the benefit of the pupils.

Across the school, the quality of teachers' questioning and verbal feedback to pupils as they carry out tasks in formal and informal situations is good. However, the quality and usefulness of teachers' written comments and pupils' responses to them vary too much from class to class. In key stage 2, written feedback tends to be too congratulatory and does not focus enough on helping pupils to improve their work. Teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to act upon the feedback they receive.

Foundation phase experiences of good quality provide purposeful opportunities for younger pupils to develop their own learning through play-based activities. This ensures that they develop their social skills effectively and, as a result, many are confident, independent learners. Teachers use the outdoor areas effectively with pupils of all ages, including the well-planned conservation and forest school areas, to promote their understanding and appreciation of the natural world and the locality.

Teachers plan many beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. As a result, most pupils make good progress in the development of their writing, number and digital competency skills. The school reflects on the effectiveness of the curriculum well and takes good account of developments relating to the new curriculum for Wales.

The school promotes pupils' awareness of Welsh culture well. Teachers plan a wide range of worthwhile learning experiences. For example, pupils have the opportunity to take part in family competitions based on the National Eisteddfod entitled 'What living in Wales means to me'. These activities coincide with St David's Day every year. Teachers plan valuable opportunities for pupils to visit places of interest around North Wales as part of their topic work. Visits to Caernarfon Castle, Greenfield Heritage Park and residential visits to Glan Llyn in Bala promote pupils' understanding of the culture and heritage of Wales appropriately.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school nurtures a calm learning environment where the relationship between staff and pupils supports learning effectively. Teachers and support staff know the pupils well and respond sensitively to their individual needs. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern. Planned learning experiences, parent online safety workshops and the work of the digital leaders ensure that pupils understand how to stay safe when working online.

The school uses effective tracking systems to check pupil progress and attainment. All teachers devise carefully-structured educational plans for individual pupils where necessary. The school provides a useful range of interventions to help targeted pupils to make appropriate progress. The co-ordination of the school's special educational needs provision ensures that staff monitor, review and discuss the progress of targeted pupils effectively.

Partnership with the local community is a particular strength of the school. The family liaison officer, together with specialist partners, provides worthwhile opportunities for parents to support their child's learning. For example, highly successful English and mathematics classes have enabled parents to achieve recognised qualifications to access further and continued adult education. Links with a charity-based company provide additional support sessions to improve pupils' self-esteem. The school communicates effectively with parents, for example through the use of social media to share work and to update parents on pupil progress.

Provision for the pupils in the social communication resource is effective. These pupils receive purposeful experiences across the curriculum that suit their needs and interests well. For example, pupils benefit from opportunities to practise their reading alongside a specially-trained dog, helping them develop their skills in a calm and supportive environment.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. A range of physical education sessions and a variety of extra-curricular activities, such as football, netball and tag rugby, provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to enjoy the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

The provision to develop pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues is effective. The school promotes respect and tolerance and celebrates diversity successfully through whole-school topics, such as Divali. Pupils develop a broad understanding of world religions through an appropriate range of planned activities. Daily acts of collective worship make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development and promote the ethos of the school as a community well.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher and governors provide effective leadership for the school. They set a clear strategic direction for its future development well. They receive effective support from the deputy headteacher and senior leaders. They set high expectations in striving to reach the school's aspirational vision. This focuses on creating a supportive environment that promotes pupils' wellbeing and helps them to develop their full potential. As a result, staff promote positive attitudes among nearly all pupils to improve themselves and to take pride in their achievements.

The school's recently revised management structure is effective. It provides valuable opportunities for all staff to develop professionally and to benefit from the sharing of good practice. All staff understand their roles and responsibilities clearly within the new management structure. Staff work together in teams well to plan interesting activities for pupils. They support each other purposefully in responding to identified school priorities and in planning to meet the requirements of the new curriculum for Wales.

Leaders manage the performance of staff effectively. Their personal objectives link well with the school's areas for development and national priorities. The process has had a positive impact on the standards of pupils' learning, for example on improving the outcomes of vulnerable pupils.

The school responds well to its identified priorities for improvement. Staff regularly evaluate progress and identify the effect of the school's provision on pupils' outcomes. For example, it has begun to adopt aspects of the new curriculum for Wales successfully, particularly by involving pupils in planning lines of enquiry. Leaders have developed a timetabled process for evaluating its work and this leads to a set of valid, clear and specific actions for improvement.

There is an appropriate number of teachers and support staff to deliver the curriculum purposefully. Teachers have shared good practice with schools in the local consortium and this has led to successful planning to extend the range and quality of pupils' writing skills.

Leaders ensure that spending decisions support the school's targets for improvement appropriately. The school built up a considerable surplus over recent years, but this has now reduced to a more appropriate level after action by the school and the local authority. The school makes effective use of the pupil development grant by providing a wide range of targeted intervention programmes that raise the standard of pupils' reading, communication and numeracy skills. The experienced business manager provides leaders and managers with accurate information on a wide range of budget issues. This enables them to make informed decisions based on the current financial information.

Governors are very supportive of the work of the school. They have established link roles to monitor the impact of various aspects of provision. Governors visit the school regularly and undertake observations of specific activities linked to their areas of responsibilities. As a result, they gain an increasing understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. They use this information well to check on the school's progress in implementing its strategic priorities and to make sure that the school's expenditure meets national requirements and is effective in improving outcomes for pupils. The knowledgeable governing body offer an appropriate level of challenge and act as well informed critical friends to the school's leadership team.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' wellbeing, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

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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