



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

A report on

**Ysgol Mynach
Devil's Bridge
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY23 4QZ**

Date of inspection: May 2019

by

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

About Ysgol Mynach

Ysgol Mynach is situated in the village of Devil's Bridge, near Aberystwyth, in Ceredigion. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work. There are 33 pupils between 4 and 11 years old on roll. On average over the past three years, approximately 8% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is significantly lower than the national percentage of 19%. Forty-three per cent (43%) of pupils speak Welsh at home and very few are from an ethnic minority background. The school has identified just over 3% of its pupils as having additional learning needs but very few have a statement of special educational needs. The percentage with additional learning needs is significantly lower than the national percentage of 21%.

The headteacher was appointed to the post in April 2011 and the school was last inspected in March 2014. The headteacher is responsible for leading two nearby schools. The assistant headteachers of the three schools work closely together and lead different aspects across the schools.

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 Mynach is an extremely close and familial community in which nearly all pupils make very good progress. The headteacher has an innovative vision that focuses continually on maintaining and raising pupils' standards of achievement and wellbeing. The headteacher works very successfully with the assistant headteacher, teachers and assistants in order to ensure the school's continuous development. Members of the governing body know the school very well. They support the school extremely effectively, while also acting successfully as a critical friend.

Pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are excellent. Nearly all pupils are confident and independent learners. They respond maturely and extremely successfully to opportunities to make decisions about their learning. Teachers and assistants work together skilfully and share expertise very successfully. The school has developed highly successful partnerships with other schools locally and regionally in order to enrich provision.

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

R Disseminate the strongest features of teaching across the school.

What happens next

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to the way the school has developed a curriculum that encourages independence among pupils, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Excellent

Approximately half the pupils start school with skills at the expected level for their age, with a few above and a few below that level. Nearly all pupils make very good progress during their time at the school. Nearly all pupils recall their previous learning successfully during their activities. They develop into extremely independent, confident and mature learners from an early age.

Nearly all pupils' listening skills in the foundation phase are very good. They listen carefully to their peers and contribute to discussions and answer questions maturely. They express themselves very skilfully in Welsh, for example when discussing and interpreting graphs showing different numbers of insects.

Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 respond confidently to questions and listen very meaningfully. They express an opinion maturely and skilfully, for example when discussing the history of the disaster at Hafod hall, close to the school. Most pupils' proficient and natural spoken language is a very strong feature.

Nearly all pupils in the foundation phase read skilfully. Pupils in the reception class recognise letters and phrases from an early age and soon develop a very sound understanding of words of one or two syllables. They have very good early writing skills and take advantage of opportunities to create simple sentences in various media and contexts.

Most Year 1 and 2 pupils read skilfully and adapt their voice in order to create an effect when reading, and give due attention to punctuation. They speak enthusiastically about their books and their liking for various stories. Most Year 1 and 2 pupils write very maturely, demonstrating a very good understanding of punctuation and spelling. Most use the past tense of the verb successfully, for example when writing a detailed factual report about a visit to a local farm to see eggs hatching. Most use extended vocabulary naturally to enrich their work.

Most key stage 2 pupils read enthusiastically and to a very good standard in both Welsh and English. Year 3 and 4 pupils discuss their love of different authors very skilfully and maturely, and refer to creative and factual forms that appeal to them. Most year 5 and 6 pupils are extremely mature readers, who read easily and with an excellent level of expression. They display a perceptive understanding of extended and challenging texts.

Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 write confidently in different forms, in both languages. The most able pupils create extended and highly effective and sensitive pieces, for example when creating a portrait of their mother, describing her personality and her special qualities. A notable example is the imaginative story, 'Y llyfr hud', which reflects impressive characterisation and original comparisons, and the diary 'y daith llon i Langrannog' which describes a visit to the Urdd camp in detail and with excellent originality and accuracy.

Most pupils in the foundation phase develop very sound numeracy skills. Most of the younger pupils recognise numbers up to 10 confidently and display a good understanding of number bonds. Most use their skills to solve simple problems in the continuous provision. Many Year 1 and 2 pupils are skilled and confident mathematicians. They use their skills maturely to respond to challenges, for example when discussing how many legs various insects have. They have an excellent understanding of the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. Most pupils apply their number skills very successfully, for example in deciphering the code of Saint Dwynwen lovespoons.

Most key stage 2 pupils have very sound number skills. They apply them very successfully in contexts across the curriculum, for example when responding to a challenge by a local company to create a wind farm on the nearby mountain. Many pupils display excellent prediction and measurement skills when using scale. They have an extremely mature understanding of the importance of applying their number skills correctly, for example when creating a detailed graph that demonstrates how much force is needed to pull an object across different surfaces.

Most pupils' ICT skills across the school are excellent. They make meaningful choices about the most effective equipment, software or apps to use in order to solve a problem or complete a task. Pupils in the foundation phase create and interpret a database confidently and key stage 2 pupils use spreadsheets successfully to record the costs of creating goods to be sold at the school's summer fair. Nearly all pupils work together extremely maturely and successfully, for example when using green screen technology to record and present their dialogues.

Most pupils' creative skills across the school are an excellent feature. A notable example is key stage 2 pupils writing sensitively in response to music by a contemporary Welsh singer based on the work of the artist Van Gogh.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

The behaviour of nearly all pupils within lessons, during break times and periods of independent working, is excellent. Pupils are very caring towards each other and treat adults and visitors with particular respect, care and maturity. They are extremely proud of their school. Nearly all give careful consideration to the needs of their peers, especially older pupils in caring for younger pupils. This is a very strong feature. Nearly all pupils feel safe in the school and enjoy all the rich opportunities they have to develop as independent learners. Nearly all enjoy the whole hustle and bustle of the school's life and work, and the stimulating activities available to them, and they appreciate the staff's care of them.

Nearly all pupils have a thorough understanding of how to stay healthy and they enjoy extensive and varied opportunities to undertake physical activity. Pupils have planned carefully and thoroughly for developing physical activities in the outdoor areas, led by the school council. A notable example is the yoga area where pupils develop their physical ability and a healthy mind-set. Most pupils in the foundation phase enjoy using outdoor play equipment, and develop a very sound awareness of the importance of physical exercise and taking care of themselves and their health. Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 have a sound understanding of the importance of healthy eating and drinking, and of looking after their bodies. They have a very

thorough awareness of the importance of developing healthy lifestyles. Nearly all are aware of how to stay safe on the internet and understand fully what to do if they are worried about something.

Nearly all pupils display a very positive attitude towards their learning. Across the range of ages and abilities, they are particularly successful in persevering with their tasks. They demonstrate an exceptional level of resilience and perseverance when faced with challenges in their work and succeed in overcoming difficulties extremely effectively. Nearly all pupils co-operate very successfully with their peers and are able to contribute independently to the next threads in their learning. They develop impressive confidence in leading their learning. Key stage 2 pupils develop highly effective leadership skills when planning activities for their peers as part of the 'Dysgu Dawnus' scheme. For example, leading children in the class through the process of creating an animation presenting the legend of Devil's Bridge was done very skilfully.

Nearly all pupils contribute very effectively to their learning. They offer ideas for inclusion in their themes, and discuss maturely with teachers. Pupils understand that their opinions are important as they improve their own learning and that of their peers, whatever their ability. As a result, they extend their knowledge and understanding very successfully. They contribute to organising educational visits and to inviting visitors to the school, which enriches their work and promotes their enthusiasm for learning extremely effectively.

Pupils' attendance percentage is robustly good over the past three years. Nearly all pupils are very keen to attend school every day, as they enjoy all the stimulating activities, and the care that is available to them. They understand the importance of regular attendance.

Nearly all pupils are extremely conscientious and take their leadership duties seriously. For example, members of the 'Lleisiau Llon – Lleisiau Ni' council undertake their responsibilities particularly well. They take great pride in their roles and discuss confidently. They give purposeful reasons for decisions that they make on behalf of the school community, for example when offering creative ideas about how to improve the school's external environment for the benefit of pupils and the school community.

The 'llysgenhadon gwyd' ensure that all pupils have a very thorough understanding of children's rights. Golden rules influence pupils' day-to-day behaviour very successfully and develop each pupil's understanding of how to be moral and knowledgeable citizens.

Teaching and learning experiences: Excellent

Teachers plan a rich and extremely effective range of learning experiences for pupils. Activities meet the needs of nearly all pupils very successfully.

A close and highly supportive working relationship exists between adults and pupils. Staff know the pupils very well and ensure that activities are adapted skilfully for their various needs. They challenge pupils continuously to stretch themselves to the best of their ability. They have high expectations of all pupils. They encourage and

support pupils successfully, building their confidence extremely skilfully as they undertake their tasks.

One of the school's innovative features is the way in which teachers adapt and develop the curriculum in order to develop pupils' independence. Staff co-operate very effectively with other schools under the headteacher's leadership in order to trial innovative changes to their curriculum. Teachers time activities very effectively, and facilitate co-operation between pupils extremely successfully. Staff often act as facilitators for learning, and encourage and question skilfully when necessary, while also allowing pupils to make their own decisions, and encouraging them to learn from their mistakes. Opportunities for key stage 2 pupils to plan and deliver lessons to the rest of the class are an excellent feature, focusing on specific skills. The system is innovative and has a very positive influence on pupils' self-confidence and develops their skills very successfully.

All staff are excellent language models. They model language proficiently and, as a result, most pupils' Welsh flows naturally. Staff enrich pupils' language through the rich use of natural idioms that pepper their conversation. This has a very positive effect on pupils' writing across the school.

Teachers and assistants use open-ended questioning skilfully when leading learning. They encourage pupils to think for themselves by setting specific challenges for them. They succeed in achieving a successful balance between adult-led activities, and opportunities for pupils to learn by making their own decisions and responding to challenges. As a result, most pupils' thinking skills and their ability to make their own decisions develop very successfully.

The principles of the foundation phase curriculum are embedded extremely successfully in the school. Staff plan opportunities for pupils to learn through experience from the outset when they join the class in the 'derbyn bach'. Teachers plan a stimulating and rich range of activities that enable pupils to develop their skills. The areas of continuous provision and enhanced provision are used masterfully to enable pupils to lead the learning and to develop into confident and independent individuals. Staff promote the development of physical skills effectively. There are regular and extremely beneficial opportunities for the youngest pupils to learn by making their own decisions.

Teachers provide high-quality oral and written feedback during activities. Feedback is skilfully adapted for different pupils, in order to challenge them to develop their work further. Staff provide regular and extremely useful opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own progress against specific success criteria. In key stage 2, many pupils create their own criteria in a sensible manner and discuss them naturally and confidently. They are able to re-draft their work maturely and discuss the rationale for improvements made to their work. They enjoy regular and valuable opportunities to evaluate the work of their friends, celebrating success, and offering ideas about possible improvements.

Planning for developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the school is extremely successful. An excellent example is the work of Year 3 and 4 pupils in creating a video presentation about the history of the burning of Hafod Mansion. They film the presentation in a mature manner, edit their work and add captions skilfully.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school is a particularly caring and inclusive community. The pupil's voice is central and a core part of the school's work and ethos. Staff encourage pupils to develop into confident citizens who are loyal to their community. The family atmosphere that promotes respect and courtesy among pupils is an outstanding feature. The school ensures regular and very rich opportunities for pupils to contribute to their school community, and promotes their participation in the wider community. A notable example is the 'Mentergarwch Mynach' scheme for creating produce to be marketed locally in order to raise funds for school resources. Pupils have extremely rich opportunities to market produce and to develop an understanding of running a business through careful budgeting.

Teachers use very thorough and effective procedures for tracking pupils' progress from the time they start at the school. Teachers track all groups of learners purposefully, including more able pupils, pupils that are identified as having additional learning needs, and pupils that are entitled to free school meals. They make regular and detailed use of procedures in order to group and target individual pupils so that they can receive specific support. For example, the most able pupils at the upper end of key stage 2 have beneficial opportunities to extend their literacy and numeracy skills by working on a package of transition resources designed by the local secondary school. As a result of the information from the tracking procedure, staff ensure that pupils are extended fully, and that they move on to the next stage in their learning.

Provision for supporting pupils with additional learning needs is very comprehensive. Teachers identify pupils' needs at an early stage and detailed intervention is tailored for them very successfully. Under the skilful leadership of the additional learning needs co-ordinator, assistants have been trained to provide purposeful intervention programmes for specific pupils. The school does well in supporting pupils that have been identified as having emotional and social needs. For example, it has ensured staff training for the promotion of emotional literacy among pupils who need additional support.

Leaders and staff design 'one-page profiles' of very good quality and they include the child fully in the process. Profiles are reviewed regularly in consultation with pupils, their parents and relevant external agencies. As a result, most pupils understand what they need to do to achieve their targets.

The school's arrangements for working with external specialist services such as the educational psychologist and speech and language therapist are effective, and have a positive influence on pupils' standards and wellbeing. The school receives good support from external agencies such as the police and the fire service, which benefits pupils.

The school helps to develop parents' ability to support their children very effectively. Reports for parents are clear and give parents very good information about their children's progress and how their child can make further progress in the future. Reports are personal to the pupil and include detailed examples that celebrate the individual's success and promote the pupil's self-confidence very successfully.

The school provides beneficial opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, social and moral awareness through assemblies and collective worship sessions. Teachers plan very rich opportunities for pupils to learn about diversity and different cultures. Pupils across the school are encouraged to eat and drink healthily. Through physical activities during the day and after-school clubs, pupils have a wide range of opportunities to improve their levels of fitness and health.

Provision for developing pupils' creative arts skills is excellent. There are extensive and rich opportunities for pupils to experiment with a variety of media such as drawing, pottery, weaving, printing and felting. This is an excellent feature. By imitating the work of famous artists such as Van Gogh and contemporary local experts, pupils produce work of a very high standard. Most pupils take part in in-house performances and many participate in local and national eisteddfodau. They have excellent opportunities to see live performances by drama companies and this enriches their work in an exceptional way. An innovative example was the school arranging for a drama company to present a performance about the poet Hedd Wyn, at Yr Ysgwrn, where he was born.

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

Leadership and management: Excellent

The headteacher has established a very strong vision based on ensuring an innovative and inclusive educational community. They share this vision very successfully with the team of assistant headteachers. They make effective use of the staff's strengths in promoting development in different areas. A notable example of this is the developments in ICT which have led to very positive progress in pupils' standards and confidence across the school. The headteacher ensures a sustained and highly effective focus on maintaining and raising pupils' standards of achievement, and on ensuring a high level of wellbeing for them. The headteacher, assistant headteacher and staff co-operate very effectively, sharing responsibilities, and sharing good practice across the schools in formal co-operation.

Members of the governing body have very thorough and detailed knowledge of the school's performance. They receive comprehensive reports from the headteacher and members of the leadership team on progress against current priorities. They play an active and successful role in the school's self-evaluation procedures by taking part in a range of activities such as learning walks and scrutinising pupils' work in order to measure progress. They take part in lesson observations, and contribute to meetings where teachers share good practice. They offer highly valuable developmental feedback to the governing body, and activities in the school development plan are evaluated continuously. They support the headteacher and the leadership team purposefully, while also ensuring a high level of accountability and acting very successfully as a critical friend to the school. This is an excellent feature of the school's work.

Self-evaluation procedures are embedded very firmly in the school. Leaders offer valuable guidance to colleagues and agree on appropriate priorities for improvement. They focus continuously on improving pupils' standards of achievement by developing provision. A successful example of this is the way in which the school

has focused on developing opportunities for pupils to lead the learning in specific activities in key stage 2. A whole-school ethos of scrutinising performance and challenging themselves to improve is a very strong feature. Sensible priorities for improvement are collated to create a highly detailed school development plan which identifies appropriate improvement activities. The scheme is evaluated regularly in accordance with specific criteria and appropriate milestones.

One of the school's innovative features is the way in which leaders promote professional development among teachers and assistants. Leaders provide numerous and extremely valuable opportunities for staff to develop their skills by sharing good practice within the school, across the schools in formal co-operation and more widely. Leaders ensure that staff develop continuously through a rich range of activities, such as training for middle leaders, and training for promoting the digital competence framework. Leaders also release staff to work with the regional consortium to support other schools with the development of the new curriculum. The headteacher works with the regional consortium in order to share good practice with schools that co-operate under the leadership of a single headteacher. As a result, the school receives new ideas and maintains enthusiasm in trialling innovative activities.

Leaders manage the school's resources very successfully. The school has a very good range of resources and there is a regular focus on developing learning areas and the school grounds, and this promotes pupils' progress and wellbeing in an excellent way. The foundation phase outdoor areas contribute very substantially to the stimulating and rich learning experiences provided for pupils. The school grounds provide very stimulating opportunities for pupils to take part in different activities, for example using large play equipment that promotes pupils' physical development successfully.

Leaders manage the budget in detail and suitable resources are targeted towards the current priorities of the school development plan. Expenditure is evaluated regularly to ensure value for money. Funding in the form of grants is targeted specifically. For example, the pupil deprivation grant is used to ensure equal access to musical instrument lessons and educational trips.

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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