



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

A report on

**Ysgol Cefn Meiriadog
Groesffordd Marli
Marli
St Asaph
Sir Ddinbych
LL22 9DS**

Date of inspection: January 2020

by

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

About Ysgol Cefn Meiriadog

Ysgol Cefn Meiriadog is in the village of Cefn Meiriadog, near St. Asaph in Denbighshire. There are 66 pupils on roll, aged from 3 to 11 years, including six part-time nursery pupils. There are three mixed-age classes in the school.

English is the predominant language for nearly all pupils. A very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. A very few pupils speak Welsh at home. The three-year average of pupils eligible for free school meals is around 13%, which is lower than the Wales average of 18%. The school identifies around 18% of pupils as having special educational needs, which is lower than the national average of 21%.

Following a period of change in leadership and staffing, the present headteacher took up her post as headteacher in January 2020. During the inspection, one class was taught by a temporary teacher. The school's previous inspection was in October 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

Pupils' wellbeing is at the heart of Ysgol Cefn Meiriadog's work. Staff place a strong emphasis on creating an inclusive community in a happy environment. They enjoy positive working relationships with pupils, ensuring that they feel cared for and valued. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school, behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Most pupils make suitable progress in the development of many of their skills as they move through the school.

Many teachers prepare an interesting range of activities that engage pupils' interest and build well on pupils' prior learning. However, they do not plan and deliver activities that consistently challenge pupils at a high enough level or develop their writing skills well enough. Teachers in key stage 2 do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) and Welsh oral skills in a broad enough range of tasks across the curriculum.

Leaders identify the school's strengths well and, on the whole, areas for improvement. However, monitoring processes and improvement plans are not always robust enough to identify and address important areas for improvement. The newly appointed headteacher is a highly motivated leader and, during the very short time she has been in post, she has been very effective in identifying key areas for development. All staff show commitment to promoting improvements in the school that benefit pupils.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure stable and effective leadership at all levels to strengthen the school's capacity for improvement
- R2 Improve tracking and monitoring processes so that they focus clearly on pupil outcomes
- R3 Challenge all pupils in key stage 2 to improve and guide their own learning in order to achieve to the best of their ability
- R4 Improve pupils' writing
- R5 Provide regular and purposeful opportunities for pupils in key stage 2 to use their numeracy, ICT and Welsh speaking skills across the curriculum

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Most pupils make suitable progress in developing their skills as they move through the school. Those with special educational needs make good progress towards their individual targets. However, more able pupils do not always make effective enough progress in relation to their ability.

Across the school, most pupils listen attentively to their teachers and each other. From an early age, foundation phase pupils talk purposefully during activities and play sessions. They share their ideas clearly and enthusiastically with adults and other pupils, for example when describing the animals in the role play area. In key stage 2, most pupils build well upon these skills and apply them purposefully to support their learning. Nearly all are keen to share their work and use a good range of vocabulary, for example, when describing how different liquids flow during a science investigation.

Most pupils in the foundation phase enjoy reading and develop their reading skills well. Nursery and Reception pupils develop a good understanding of letters and sounds and begin to build words confidently. As pupils move through the foundation phase, they learn a useful range of strategies to help them to decode unfamiliar words and to read with understanding. By the end of the foundation phase, many pupils read familiar texts fluently and accurately. Most pupils in key stage 2 develop confidence as readers and read an increasing range of books accurately and with expression. By Year 6, many develop their higher order reading skills well. For example, they make inferences and deductions about how a character feels from the author's use of vocabulary.

In the foundation phase, many pupils develop their writing skills successfully. By Year 2, many write in a neat style for a variety of purposes. For example, they use emotive words to describe how they feel when the snowman melts. They extend their sentences using basic connecting words and use capital letters and full stops accurately. However, few write at length independently. In key stage 2, many pupils build appropriately on their writing skills in a suitable range of styles. For example, they use the novel 'Goodnight Mr Tom' as a stimulus for writing a letter as the character Willie Beech. Most pupils use a suitable range of punctuation correctly and many write neatly and present their work carefully. However, pupils' ability to express their ideas for a wide range of purposes through extended writing is limited.

In the foundation phase, nearly all pupils make good progress with their mathematical development. By Year 2, most have well-developed number skills, and a sound grasp of shape, capacity and data. They gather data about fruit and vegetables left over from snack time to create accurate pictograms, and they make sensible predictions as to which fruit pupils like best based on their findings. They apply their understanding of money well, for example, when selling their cakes at a fundraising coffee morning. Most pupils in key stage 2 make good progress in practising their skills in a range of mathematics. Most pupils in Years 3 and 4 use their numeracy skills accurately, for example, to calculate the capacity of different liquids when creating a magic potion. By Year 6, most pupils have a good

understanding of the four rules of number and apply them successfully to solve problems, for example, when converting imperial units to decimal in order to bake a cake using a wartime recipe. However, many pupils apply only a limited range of numeracy and problem-solving skills appropriately in other areas of the curriculum.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make good progress in developing their spoken Welsh and many use Welsh confidently as part of class routines. By Year 2, many ask and respond to simple questions following basic patterns, for example when discussing the weather. In key stage 2, the majority of pupils use a suitable range of basic vocabulary to respond appropriately to familiar questions about themselves. However, they do not use their oral Welsh language skills confidently enough in other areas of the curriculum and around the school. This limits the progress they make.

Many foundation phase pupils make purposeful use of their ICT skills to support their work across the curriculum. By Year 2, many use a suitable range of applications on tablet computers to record their activities and to create simple graphs using a data handling package. Many key stage 2 pupils access the internet safely and use a suitable range of software competently to present their work on food rationing during the Second World War, for example. However, pupils in key stage 2 use ICT for too narrow a range of purposes across the curriculum. Few use ICT effectively to handle data or to model situations, for example using spreadsheets.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school and are confident in the school environment. They show care and respect for one another and for adults. The warmth and strength of the working relationships between pupils and staff mean that pupils feel safe in school and know what to do if they are worried or anxious. Nearly all pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and well-mannered, and most listen attentively to their teachers and respect other pupils' opinions.

Most pupils are positive and enthusiastic about their learning, enjoy the topics that they study and are eager to do well. They settle quickly in class and are ready to learn promptly. Many are hardworking and enthusiastic learners, who work together well, and stay diligently on task for extended periods. From an early age, pupils in the foundation phase become increasingly independent in their learning and demonstrate perseverance when completing tasks in the areas of continuous and enhanced provision. By Year 2, many pupils show curiosity and demonstrate the confidence to try new experiences enthusiastically and independently. Many pupils in key stage 2 respond readily to the opportunities they are given to decide upon what they want to learn at the beginning of new topics. However, pupils' skills in improving and guiding their own learning are only just beginning to develop. Generally, they rely too much on adults to direct them in their learning.

Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of how to make healthy lifestyle choices. They talk enthusiastically about how a recent performance of 'The Pirates of the Chilli Bean' helped them to learn about the importance of healthy meals and food hygiene. They make informed choices, for example when purchasing fruit at playtimes. Nearly all pupils discuss sensibly how exercise is an important aspect of keeping healthy. Many participate energetically in the daily mile and take part enthusiastically in the range of extra-curricular activities that the school provides, including sport, dance

and gymnastics. This has a positive effect on their fitness and wellbeing. Most pupils have a clear understanding of online safety and how to stay safe when using the internet.

Pupils enjoy taking on additional responsibilities, such as becoming members of pupil voice groups in the school, and take those responsibilities seriously. For example, members of the school council provide worthwhile ideas on how to improve the toilets and raise money for outdoor equipment. They are proud of their involvement in fundraising activities through organising coffee mornings and dress up days for local and national charities, including the local hospice and Children in Need. This has positive effect on most pupils' awareness of the needs of others in their community and the wider world.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly and punctually.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Across the school, teachers develop effective working relationships with pupils and create a productive atmosphere for teaching and learning. They know their pupils well and provide them with effective support while they work and interact with their peers. This has a positive effect on pupils' wellbeing in particular.

Many teachers plan an interesting range of activities that engage most pupils' interest and build well on pupils' prior learning. They match tasks appropriately to pupils' abilities and ensure that most pupils are motivated and challenged. They use support staff effectively to support pupils' learning. In these classes, teachers have high expectations and use open-ended questions such as 'Why do leaves go crispy?' successfully to encourage pupils to think for themselves. This encourages pupils' curiosity and develops positive attitudes to new experiences. As a result, pupils have the confidence to try new tasks enthusiastically and independently. However, on a few occasions when teaching is less effective, teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' achievement. They guide activities too much and do not adapt the work to meet pupils' needs well enough. This limits opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills and does not provide enough challenge for pupils, especially for those who are more able.

All teachers share the learning objective for the lesson appropriately with pupils and many identify clearly the success criteria that pupils need to be aware of to complete their work well. Generally, teachers' feedback indicates to pupils what they do well and what they need to do to improve, but this is not consistent across the school. Overall, teachers do not use assessment for learning frequently or well enough to encourage pupils to become reflective learners, particularly in key stage 2.

Foundation phase provision is embedded firmly in the school. Teachers include pupils' ideas successfully to plan an effective balance of activities led by staff and opportunities for pupils to work independently in the range of learning areas. From the outset, they provide stimulating tasks and experiences that engage nearly all pupils' interest effectively. They use the outdoor learning environment successfully for practical tasks, such as building houses to re-enact the story of the 3 little pigs. This develops pupils' problem solving and creative skills successfully. Staff make

effective use of the local environment, for example taking pupils for a winter walk around the village to look for signs of winter and visiting a local farm to bottle-feed the lambs. These activities provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills effectively across the areas of learning.

Key stage 2 teachers provide a range of valuable learning experiences that meet many pupils' needs effectively. They plan interesting cross-curricular themes that provide suitable coverage of all subjects and expand many pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding well. Staff are beginning to offer opportunities for pupils to share their ideas and interests at the start of new topics. However, teachers' planning does not always include enough occasions for pupils to develop their ability to write independently at length or to apply their numeracy and ICT skills progressively in a broad enough range of tasks across the curriculum.

Teachers provide a beneficial range of activities that help pupils to develop an understanding of Welsh history, culture and the local environment, for example through participating in the Urdd eisteddfod and the study of the local area. A residential visit to the Urdd Centre in Cardiff promotes pupils' appreciation of the culture and modern economy of Wales and develops their self-esteem and independence well.

Overall, teachers support pupils to develop their Welsh language skills appropriately. In Foundation Phase all pupils are exposed to the Welsh language daily. As a result, many use a suitable range of basic vocabulary and sentence patterns with increasing confidence as part of class routines. In key stage 2, provision in Welsh lessons is appropriate, but teachers do not ensure enough opportunities for pupils to practise their oral Welsh language skills in other areas of the curriculum and around the school.

Care, support and guidance: Good

Staff create a safe, happy and caring community that nurtures pupils' personal, social, spiritual and cultural skills well. The school provides a calm, welcoming environment that has a positive effect on pupils' wellbeing and behaviour. The high level of care and co-operation between staff and pupils supports pupils effectively to develop their social and moral understanding. Staff know the pupils well and respond sensitively to their social and emotional needs. The school promotes the importance of good behaviour, courtesy and respect successfully.

The school has established an appropriate tracking system to monitor pupils' progress as they move through school. Staff use this information purposefully to promote good behaviour and regular attendance, and to provide for pupils who need additional support. This ensures that pupils who need extra help are identified early and supported through suitable intervention programmes that are adapted to meet their individual needs. Teachers create useful one-page profiles for all pupils with special educational needs, together with good quality individual education plans. They include specific targets for improvement that help staff to monitor pupils' progress effectively. Teachers review these plans regularly with parents and their children to plan appropriately for the next steps in their learning. Staff work effectively with specialist agencies that provide valuable support and guidance to address the needs of specific pupils. These arrangements ensure that targeted

pupils make good progress in relation to their abilities. However, staff do not always use information from the tracking and monitoring process effectively enough to ensure that more able pupils achieve highly.

The school provides beneficial programmes to support vulnerable pupils, including those with social and emotional needs. Staff conduct questionnaires with each pupil to measure their self-esteem and general sense of wellbeing. A trained member of staff puts a programme of support in place for those identified pupils. This provision raises pupils' self-esteem and confidence significantly and helps the targeted pupils to engage effectively in school life.

The school promotes pupils' social, moral and spiritual development effectively during acts of collective worship and during lessons. Teachers promote pupils' cultural development through a range of interesting curriculum activities. Notable examples include a residential visit to Urdd in Cardiff, participating in the Jamboree and reflecting upon and comparing music from different cultures in the context of religious worship. The school has forged positive partnerships with the local community, which enrich pupils' experiences successfully. For example, strong links with the local church, where foundation phase pupils held a wedding, help to develop their personal and social skills. Teachers in key stage 2 provide valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about the local environment, for example by visiting a local water treatment works to learn about how clean water reaches their homes.

The school establishes productive relationships with parents. Parents value the warm welcome they receive at the school. Staff use a wide range of communication channels to provide useful information about day-to-day matters and the school's activities. They encourage pupils to share examples of their work with their families through an online application. This enables parents to see what their child has achieved in school. Staff talk to parents regularly about their children's progress and wellbeing. This not only enables them to raise any concerns they have but ensures that they are increasingly aware of what they can do at home to support their children's learning.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. Teachers provide pupils with worthwhile opportunities to learn about making lifestyle choices. This helps pupils to make sensible lifestyle choices so that they are aware, for example, of the need to bring healthy snacks and drinks to school. For example, they ensure that fruit is available daily through a breaktime fruit shop. Staff promote the importance of physical fitness well through a beneficial range of extra-curricular sports clubs.

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

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

During the recent extended period of instability in leadership, the caring and sensitive leadership of the acting headteacher supported staff to maintain a positive, whole-school ethos. The school's homely, inclusive and caring ethos is evident and is a natural part of its work. Staff are dedicated and hardworking, and they collaborate well to ensure that pupil wellbeing is at the heart of their work.

The newly appointed headteacher is a highly motivated leader who has high expectations of herself, her staff, pupils and governors. During the very short time she has been in post, she has identified key areas for development that focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring consistency in planning, assessment and tracking pupils' progress. She has met with all staff to clarify expectations and job descriptions, to distribute appropriate curriculum leadership roles and to agree suitable performance management processes. Staff objectives link well to their individual development needs and the current priorities of the school development plan. All staff show purposeful commitment to promoting improvements. However, it is too early to assess the impact of these initiatives on teaching and learning.

The school has appropriate processes in place to evaluate its performance and to plan for improvement. The process is based on a suitable range of classroom observations and pupil performance data. Leaders use this information suitably to identify appropriate areas for improvement, for example, the need to improve pupils' ICT and Welsh language skills. However, over time, reviews by leaders have not been rigorous enough to identify other important areas in need of improvement clearly enough, including the need to improve the quality of pupils' writing and the lack of challenge for more able pupils. The school has made only limited progress towards addressing the recommendations of the previous inspection.

Members of the governing body are supportive of the school's life and work and undertake their duties appropriately. They receive regular reports from school leaders and individual governors visit school, for example, to help with Welsh reading and carry out a review of mathematics. This provides them with a suitable understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, governors' contribution to the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning processes is limited and this reduces their ability to challenge leaders about pupil progress over time.

The school uses its available resources appropriately to provide interesting and varied learning experiences for pupils. Leaders monitor expenditure carefully and as a result, the school is well resourced with suitable books, computers and other equipment to meet the needs of all pupils. The school uses a range of grants purposefully, including the pupil development grant, to provide support and intervention for vulnerable pupils. As a result, these pupils make good progress against their individual targets.

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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