



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

A report on

Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Myrddin

**Croesyceiliog
Carmarthen
SA32 8DN**

Date of inspection: March 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Myrddin

Name of provider	Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Myrddin
Local authority	Carmarthenshire
Language of the provider	Welsh-medium
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	928
Pupils of statutory school age	743
Number in sixth form (if applicable)	185
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals in the secondary sector over the last three years is 18.7%)</i>	4.2%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs in the secondary sector is 21.7%)</i>	10.2%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	70%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01-01-2014
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	16-11-2015
Start date of inspection	28-03-2022
Additional information	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different from those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

(a) The term 'additional learning needs' is used to describe those pupils on the school's SEN/ALN register.

Overview

Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Myrddin provides a highly positive and motivating learning environment for pupils. The school has a Welsh and homely ethos where all pupils' emotional and mental health needs are a continuous priority. There is an extremely close and supportive working relationship between staff and pupils.

There is a caring culture at the school that promotes pupils' personal development very effectively. The rich opportunities that the school provides supports learners to become principled, respectful citizens who contribute fully to school life.

Overall, pupils have very positive attitudes to their work and nearly all behave excellently in lessons and around the school. These attributes contribute to the swift progress that most pupils make in their lessons. Pupils in the sixth form have mature interpersonal skills and most develop a deep understanding of the texts they are studying.

During their time at the school, most pupils make strong progress in their ability to express themselves in Welsh and English, both orally and in writing. Overall, they engage in discussions enthusiastically and listen respectfully to other pupils' views.

The school provides a broad offer of courses in key stage 4 and the sixth form. There is also a very wide range of opportunities for pupils to take part in valuable cultural and physical activities.

In many lessons, there is effective teaching which ensures that pupils develop their subject skills and knowledge well. In these lessons, there is careful planning which engages pupils' interest and provides them with an appropriate challenge. However, a few teachers do not plan their lessons effectively enough or ensure that pupils develop their thinking skills sufficiently.

Leaders are gradually resuming their quality assurance processes to identify strengths and areas for improvement in their areas of responsibility and across the school. As a result of restrictions due to the pandemic, leaders are not currently using the full range of self-evaluation methods effectively enough or evaluating the effect of teaching on pupils' standards and progress.

The headteacher provides wise, sensible and supportive guidance to all stakeholders. She places significant importance on fostering a caring and supportive ethos. Leaders at all levels, including governors, take pride in their roles and shoulder their responsibilities diligently. As a result of these strengths in leadership, Ysgol Gyfun Bro Myrddin is thriving as a hard-working, civilised and happy community.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that leaders resume a wide range of rigorous quality assurance activities
- R2 Strengthen leaders' ability to evaluate the quality of provision according to its effect
- R3 Share strong practices in teaching to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching across the school

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

Since returning to their classes after the restrictions of the pandemic, pupils have resumed their learning enthusiastically. Their very positive attitudes to their work have contributed to the swift progress that most make in their subject knowledge and understanding, in addition to their skills. Overall, pupils with specific learning needs make very good progress as a result of strong, co-ordinated support.

In most cases, pupils recall previous learning correctly and develop their ability to apply it to a range of situations skilfully. For example, in their Welsh lessons, they recall facts about the experiences of Hedd Wyn when writing the monologue of a soldier during the Great War.

Nearly all pupils express themselves clearly in Welsh and most develop as natural, fluent speakers. Most listen attentively to their teachers. They have broad general and subject-specific vocabulary. When they are given an opportunity to do so, they discuss ideas with each other in a civilised way and respect other people's views. In their English lessons, pupils also demonstrate a wide vocabulary and the ability to express their views clearly. A minority of pupils communicate their ideas orally in a sophisticated manner in both languages.

Most pupils have strong reading skills. When they are given the opportunity to do so, they read fluently with appropriate expression. They are able to gather relevant information from a range of texts skilfully and many are able to synthesise evidence from a range of sources to form sensible conclusions. Many pupils are able to infer messages that are implied in texts correctly. They use their translanguaging skills to develop their subject understanding well. Many pupils are able to read music correctly and use this skill to perform musical pieces skilfully.

Many pupils convey their ideas clearly in extended writing across the subjects. They organise their work into logical paragraphs and write in Welsh or English with few grammatical or spelling errors and demonstrate a broad general and subject-specific vocabulary. Many pupils consider the audience carefully, for example when writing a speech to persuade people that either Greta Thunberg or Aneurin Bevan has had the greatest effect on society.

Overall, pupils make good progress in their physical skills, for example by throwing and catching a ball while playing rounders and in their design and technology lessons when handling a range of equipment. In their music lessons, many pupils develop a good understanding of how to place their fingers correctly on the keyboards.

Many pupils demonstrate strong creative skills. For example, in their drama lessons, they portray characters from the work entitled 'Enwau' ('Names') by varying their tone of voice, their posture and their facial expression.

Most pupils make strong progress in their number skills and apply these in a range of appropriate subjects. They complete calculations correctly when working with fractions and decimals. Many are able to produce and plot a line of best fit graph

correctly. As they move to key stage 4, many develop more advanced skills, such as rearranging formulae and solving quadratic equations.

In the sixth form, most pupils show a deep understanding of subject concepts. They are able to apply these skilfully, for example when deciding whether a specific statistical test is appropriate for a set of data. Overall, they are eloquent pupils who express themselves in a sophisticated manner and complete their work energetically.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils' standards of well-being and attitudes to learning are obvious strengths. Nearly all pupils take pride in their Welshness and take advantage of the extensive opportunities that are available to learn and socialise through the medium of Welsh. There is a strong sense among pupils of belonging to the 'Ysgol Bro Myrddin family'. Nearly all pupils feel safe at the school and behave respectfully in lessons and around the school. They are welcoming towards visitors and speak to them maturely. Most pupils feel that they are free from bullying and that staff respond to any rare cases in a timely manner.

Most pupils' civilised behaviour in lessons and around the school during break time and lunchtime is an exceptional feature. Although there are very few cases of misbehaviour, a very few younger pupils do not pay enough attention in lessons.

Many pupils are ambitious and capable, show resilience and develop as responsible and confident citizens. Most have very positive attitudes to their work and many undertake tasks energetically and enthusiastically.

Most pupils work well with others in pairs and groups, behave very responsibly when listening to others and respect different opinions. In lessons and during registration periods, they are very willing to express an opinion on the world's problems, such as global warming, population density and natural disasters.

Many pupils understand how to become healthy and confident individuals and develop their awareness of how to take care of their mental health. Many pupils benefit from attending a host of appealing extra-curricular activities that provide them with very valuable opportunities to socialise with their friends. These include choirs, various clubs, competitions, eisteddfodau and sports.

Many pupils contribute effectively to the school community and beyond. For example, they compete in their houses to raise money for local and national charities. A large number of pupils take advantage of the valuable opportunities across the school to express an opinion on their education and experiences. They express their views effectively through the school council, the well-being forums, the eco committee and the humanitarian committee and provide the senior leadership team with sensible ideas on how to improve provision.

Sixth-form pupils behave very maturely and responsibly. They are extremely welcoming towards visitors and take pride in their school. Many pupils benefit significantly from undertaking leadership roles, for example when leading councils and various groups, leading houses and receiving training to mentor and support vulnerable pupils.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not be reporting on pupil attendance rates during the 2021-2022 academic year. However, inspectors will consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

A strong feature of teaching at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Myrddin is the stimulating and positive working relationship between teachers and pupils. Most teachers establish an inclusive, homely and hard-working environment in the classroom. They are supportive of pupils, encourage their contribution and perseverance and praise their efforts.

Many teachers provide clear instructions and explain concepts in an engaging and skilful manner. They plan cohesive tasks and use a variety of attractive and beneficial resources to support learning. They challenge pupils to read, search and discover information independently and, as a result, pupils make consistent progress. These teachers give clear guidance by providing examples of work that provide good practice for pupils to emulate. Many lessons have a lively tempo and teachers have high expectations in terms of pupils' behaviour and achievement.

In a few lessons, where teaching is at its best, teachers engage pupils' interest with their enthusiasm and passion for the subject. They plan skilfully and provide challenging tasks that motivate pupils to achieve to the best of their ability. These teachers ask incisive and probing questions that stimulate pupils to think more deeply, expand their understanding and justify their views. They also model sophisticated problem-solving methods so that pupils can emulate them and apply them.

In a few lessons, teachers do not provide examples of answers or good practices to ensure that pupils are clear about what is expected of them. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not question pupils in enough depth to help them to develop their understanding and thinking skills. They have a tendency to check knowledge rather than probe and deepen their understanding. A few teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. They either present repetitive tasks, over-manage learning or ignore mispronunciations and responses that are riddled with English words.

Many teachers provide valuable and constructive oral feedback on pupils' work and effort. They walk around the classroom carefully to monitor pupils' progress and intervene purposefully, where necessary. A majority of teachers provide useful feedback by identifying strengths and weaknesses in specific pieces of pupils' work in their books. On the whole, pupils respond satisfactorily to this advice. Again, overall, there is variation in the quality and effectiveness of teachers' comments within and across departments. At times, comments are either too superficial, too generous or do not provide enough advice or purposeful opportunities for pupils to improve their work. The school is trialling new assessment methods and departments are beginning to experiment with these new approaches.

The school is planning its provision purposefully to introduce the Curriculum for Wales. Developments are based on a clear vision that incorporates the views of

pupils and stakeholders. The school has begun to introduce new and innovative programmes and lessons that respond to pupils' wishes. For example, there are health and well-being, financial education and first aid lessons and units of work that develop pupils' understanding of political aspects and the importance of voting. The school is beginning to experiment by developing teaching outside the classroom.

The school curriculum is suitably balanced and meets the needs of nearly all pupils. The school provides a wide and suitable range of courses in key stage 4 and the sixth form. The school has established a valuable relationship with a local college to provide courses such as agriculture, car mechanics, hair and beauty through the medium of Welsh. Working with local Welsh-medium secondary schools means that the school is able to provide a wide range of courses for sixth-form pupils through the medium of Welsh. The school advises pupils very effectively to ensure that they pursue the routes that are most appropriate for them for the future.

Following the lockdown period, the school has supported individual pupils to regain and develop their basic skills through intervention programmes, which include revision strategy sessions for the school's older pupils. The school also provides valuable and varied experiences for the most able and talented pupils, such as an English debating club, a project to create a mural and a design and technology club that develops advanced manufacturing processes. There is a wide offer of valuable extra-curricular experiences that enrich pupils' learning experiences further.

The literacy and numeracy co-ordinators work appropriately with relevant departments to ensure that consistent methods are used in lessons to develop pupils' skills. There are purposeful intervention programmes in place to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of specific pupils. This includes the valuable contribution of a few sixth-form pupils as numeracy mentors. The school is developing its provision for digital skills appropriately. This includes mapping opportunities across the curriculum and identifying gaps in provision.

An extremely strong feature is the way that the school develops and enriches pupils' Welsh communication skills and promotes the benefits of bilingualism. There is very effective provision to develop pupils' Welshness, their understanding and pride in Welsh culture. The 'Torri Arfer' committee has been established following the lockdown to promote speaking Welsh, and creative and exciting activities, such as 'Maes B bach', add to the variety of experiences.

The personal and social education (PSE) programme is appropriate and comprehensive and develops pupils' understanding of current affairs through units such as 'Bullying or Banter?', 'Welshness' and 'Self-image'. The school develops valuable units of work on the history and experiences and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in Wales and discusses local issues. These include a discussion activity on the question 'Should there be a memorial to Thomas Picton in Carmarthen?' The PSE programme is evaluated regularly and pupils influence the content of their lessons. For example, the school has recently expanded the opportunities to discuss LGBTQ+ issues, at the request of pupils.

Care, support and guidance

Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Myrddin is a caring community that supports all pupils' emotional, health and social needs strongly. Staff embrace these priorities and promote a beneficial culture of safeguarding. Strong pastoral arrangements support this culture and contribute towards developing articulate and polite pupils who represent the school with pride.

Pastoral leaders have an exceptional awareness of pupils' learning and well-being needs. The school plans comprehensive well-being provision that supports pupils' emotional, health and social needs effectively. This includes purposeful support in lessons and other activities to foster pupils' confidence and resilience. Following the lockdown period, specific pupils have also benefitted from activities to discuss their emotions to develop a positive attitude and self-control.

By listening to the pupil's voice, the school has identified well the social challenges that they face. In addition, they plan a PSE programme and valuable experiences in the curriculum purposefully to promote a culture in which pupils respect each other and show empathy, for example through a humanitarian 'Lip-sync Competition' to raise money for Ukraine. By responding to pupils' concerns, the school has also planned valuable sessions carefully to support their well-being by holding a mental health day and resilience-building sessions.

The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) has sound knowledge of the needs of pupils with specific learning difficulties. Pupils' one-page profiles include useful information for staff to support these pupils. Staff plan valuable interventions to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and there are strong arrangements to track the progress of these pupils. Leaders use this information beneficially to evaluate the quality and effect of provision.

The school provides rich opportunities for the school's older pupils to lead activities that celebrate Welsh heritage. The 'Humanitarian Committee' provides an opportunity for the school's older pupils to take responsibility and lead humanitarian activities. There is an opportunity for pupils to engage and take pride in Welsh culture by taking part in musicals, such as 'Un Heol Penlan', and by competing in school and national eisteddfodau.

The school council meets regularly to discuss how to improve the school, for example by developing the 'Panedini' and 'Blas Tu Fas' areas. The school has also developed a Well-being Forum to ensure an opportunity for a wider variety of pupils to express their views about the school. As a result of the lockdown period during the pandemic, the school has developed a valuable system in which pupils are able to inform staff about concerns anonymously.

There are appropriate acts of collective worship and weekly assemblies that introduce religious and moral aspects. A programme of valuable virtual assemblies also ensures a moral message on various topics, such as perseverance, encouraging each other and respecting differences.

The school's systems for monitoring and promoting attendance are effective. Following the lockdown period, there are purposeful processes to reintegrate specific

pupils. The school works effectively with the local authority to support pupils to return to school. The school also works effectively with external agencies and the careers advisor to provide all pupils with personal support as they move forward to the next stage.

Arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are sound and staff understand their roles when undertaking safeguarding arrangements.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision that is based on ensuring that the school is a safe, thriving and beneficial place for all pupils and staff. There is a strong emphasis on embracing and celebrating Welshness and Welsh heritage within the school community and the wider community, in addition to celebrating pupils' successes. The headteacher conveys her vision and the school's objectives eloquently and consistently to all stakeholders. She is visible and influential around the site and is an excellent role model. She is supported effectively by the rest of the senior leadership team.

Overall, leaders at all levels set high expectations in terms of the professional conduct and commitment of staff, pupils and themselves, and this contributes to the strong familial ethos of the 'Bro Myrddin family'. Staff well-being is supported regularly, for example through regular meetings of the staff well-being committee. A notable element of support for staff is the personal telephone calls from the headteacher to all members of staff during the lockdown periods during the pandemic.

The school has fostered a close and supportive relationship with parents, and leaders ensure that they convey messages and beneficial information frequently and regularly. This includes weekly letters to parents and comprehensive information on the school website. The success of this communication is an exceptional feature.

The school gives strong attention to national priorities, for example by employing a family engagement officer to address the harmful effects of the pandemic and reduce the effect of poverty and social deprivation on pupils' educational attainment. Leaders are preparing purposefully to develop the Curriculum for Wales and are moving calmly and sensibly towards implementing the Curriculum from September 2022. The school has planned purposefully to restore and strengthen pupils' Welsh language skills following the pandemic. This includes developing Welsh language skills in formal and informal situations at the school. For example, there are excellent opportunities for pupils to socialise through the medium of Welsh.

Regular line management meetings are held, which ensure beneficial communication between staff and their managers. These meetings usually include suitable discussions about operational issues and a few important elements about pupils' standards and the quality of teaching. However, these elements do not receive detailed enough attention across all management meetings.

Staff are given appropriate support to develop in their roles and are given additional management experiences when opportunities arise. Performance management arrangements are suitable, on the whole. For example, staff are given generous

support to pursue their personal aspirations by undertaking action research in an area that is of interest to them. However, there are inconsistencies in the performance management procedure. A few objectives are not incisive enough and, in a majority of cases, monitoring and evaluation arrangements are not robust enough.

Governors understand their roles and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They are passionate about the school and embrace the values and aspirations that are communicated by the headteacher. They have worked tirelessly to ensure that there are appropriate arrangements for eating and drinking healthily and sufficient opportunities for physical exercise. Governors, the headteacher and the bursar manage the school's resources very carefully. They prioritise expenditure wisely and make purposeful use of grants, including the Pupil Development Grant.

During the pandemic, the school sought the views of pupils, parents and staff regularly about the suitability and quality of online lessons. This led beneficially to adapting the daily schedule and ensuring activities to promote pupils' well-being. After returning to school, managers and teachers have continued to seek the views of pupils, parents and staff, for example by considering their views on continuing with online parents' evenings. The school has identified appropriate priorities for improvement based on evidence from these activities and information from the quality assurance processes prior to the pandemic.

Gradually, the school is resuming its quality assurance procedures to include a fuller range of activities to gather first-hand evidence on the quality of provision. This includes opportunities for middle managers to scrutinise pupils' works and discuss with their line managers, in addition to opportunities to seek pupils' views. As a result of the restrictions during the pandemic, leaders do not currently use the full range of self-evaluation methods effectively enough or evaluate the effect of learning on pupils' standards and progress. This means that they do not have a complete picture of the strengths and areas for improvement within their areas of responsibility. Overall, leaders do not consider the quality of teaching according to its effect on pupils' progress in their lessons.

The school provides an appropriate range of training for teachers, including opportunities to attend courses by external providers, for example to support the development of the Curriculum for Wales. Support staff are given valuable opportunities to develop specific skills that relate to their roles. There are also valuable opportunities for staff to develop their leadership skills by shadowing other leaders and completing internal and external secondments. Despite these opportunities, the school does not always plan strategically enough for staff's professional development in order to respond to the priorities for improvement that are identified in the development plan.

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/members of the management committee 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, middle leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work 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 lessons, including learning support groups and the specialist resource base (where appropriate), 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 (where appropriate) and in outdoor areas
- visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning (where appropriate)
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs
- 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' well-being, 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 (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>)

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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