



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

A report on

Ysgol Pen Y Bryn

**Wentworth Avenue
Colwyn Bay
Conwy
LL29 6DD**

Date of inspection: June 2022

by

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

About Ysgol Pen Y Bryn

Name of provider	Ysgol Pen Y Bryn
Local authority	Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Conwy
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	452
Pupils of statutory school age	353
Number in nursery classes	48
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 21.3%)	9.8%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 22.2%)	10.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	4%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	5.9%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	04/06/2013
Start date of inspection	06/06/2022

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to 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 being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Pupils at Ysgol Pen y Bryn primary enjoy coming to school and make strong progress in their academic and social skills. They are caring, tolerant and respectful towards each other and to adults. There is a feeling of mutual trust and respect between pupils and staff. Pupils know that adults in the school care for them and that they can turn to them when they face challenges or have difficulties. Senior leaders have worked hard to create this calm and nurturing ethos and it plays a key role in ensuring effective learning in the school.

The school provides a rich, broad, and balanced range of learning experiences and additional provision that meets the educational and wider needs and interests of pupils well. Teachers take good account of pupils' ideas when planning the curriculum and this helps to ensure that most pupils display high levels of interest and engagement in their learning. Staff ensure that most teaching is purposeful and enables pupils to use existing and newly learned skills in real life contexts. This means that, as pupils move through the school, most develop a secure understanding of what and how they are learning.

Leaders set a positive and ambitious tone for the school's work. They promote collaboration and teamwork very well and place a high priority on developing pupils as ambitious, confident, and independent learners. They are good at identifying the areas of the school's work that are most effective and those aspects that need to be improved. This supports the school to plan and implement improvement strategies effectively. This is reflected in the work by the whole staff team to develop the school's curriculum ready for the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales.

Recommendations

- R1 Provide opportunities for pupils to make decisions about how they organise and present their work and to decide for themselves how they respond to learning tasks
- R2 Strengthen provision for the development of pupils' Welsh language skills
- R3 Provide regular opportunities for pupils in Years 3 to 6 to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make strong progress in their learning. The pandemic has slowed this progress for a minority of pupils, particularly in the development of their Welsh language skills.

Most pupils articulate their ideas with clarity. They understand that listening attentively to adults and to each other contributes beneficially to their learning. From an early age, pupils are keen to show and talk about what they are doing. By Year 2, many pupils express their ideas well and speak with enthusiasm, for example, when describing the pirate ship, they are building using construction materials. As they progress through the school, most pupils communicate purposefully, for example when discussing the impact of climate change on the environment. By Year 6, most are articulate and confident speakers. They share suggestions well and use a good range of vocabulary when discussing, for example photographs of the Aberfan disaster.

The development of pupils' Welsh language skills has been hampered by missed learning opportunities arising from the lockdown periods. Many pupils in the Nursery and Reception classes respond appropriately to class instructions by the teacher and, by Year 2, many pupils use simple greetings and respond appropriately to questions about the weather, for example. Many older pupils answer with basic responses during discussions with teachers and each other. However, their Welsh language skills are not as advanced as might be expected for their age. Consequently, pupils do not use their oral Welsh language skills confidently enough in other areas of the curriculum and around the school.

Nursery and reception pupils enjoy listening to stories and retelling them to their friends and adults. They begin to recognise and name a range of sounds and use this knowledge to start to read simple but stage-appropriate texts. By Year 2, many pupils read with increasing fluency and understanding. As pupils move through the school, they build on this progress and develop a good range of strategies to become fluent readers. By Year 6 many pupils read a range of appropriate texts independently and apply their reading skills effectively to support their learning in different learning areas, for example when undertaking research into the life of Anne Frank and her diary.

From a young age, many pupils show enthusiasm for writing when experimenting with mark making. They go on to write with increasing independence and fluency. By Year 2, many write an increasing range of sentences effectively, and develop their ideas creatively and imaginatively when writing a news report about 'Confusion in Magic Land', for example. As they progress through the school, pupils develop a good understanding of the characteristics of different genres. Many write perceptively for a wide range of purposes. They choose words carefully to enhance their writing for the reader, for example before drafting an account of how a character in their class book would feel with a war going on outside the 'House on the Lake'. By Year 6, many pupils plan, draft and improve their work thoroughly to produce high quality,

well-structured writing, for example when writing a letter to the Prime Minister about the impact of global warming on the environment.

Many pupils develop their mathematical skills well. From an early age, many pupils develop a good understanding of numbers, size and shape. By Year 2, many build on these skills as they learn to add and subtract numbers. They develop a secure understanding of place value in two-digit numbers. Most find quarters of numbers to 20 successfully using a variety of practical equipment. More able pupils recognise patterns in sequences of numbers when dividing by 2, 3 and 4. Most pupils in Years 3 to 6 work well with the four rules of number, shape and measure and develop sound data handling skills. Many apply their developing numeracy skills well to solve problems. They are happy to learn from their mistakes and to share tips with their peers when checking answers. By Year 6, many pupils use a wide range of methods competently to calculate in their heads and on paper when solving problems. They describe their thinking and reasoning well and explain how they have reached conclusions. Generally, however, pupils in Years 3 to 6 do not use their numeracy skills at a similar level in other areas of the curriculum.

During lockdown periods, teachers used a range of technologies well to support pupils' home learning. This had a positive impact on pupils' digital skills. From an early age, pupils now apply those skills in a range of creative contexts to support their wider learning. By Year 2, many use tablet computers confidently to record their learning, for example when writing an invitation to a party. They develop their understanding of data handling well, for example when creating a tally chart of the ingredients in 'The spell that went wrong'. By Year 6, many pupils use their digital skills well to support independent research and to write, edit, re-draft and present their findings, for example when learning about the experience of evacuees during the Second World War. Many pupils create and use databases and spreadsheets successfully, for example when exploring the amount of sugar in various foods.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school and are confident in the school environment. They are caring, tolerant and respectful towards each other and to adults. They listen carefully to what their friends and teachers say and respond to their ideas considerately. They play co-operatively, take turns, and support each other well, when playing games and socialising at break times. They behave well and move around sensibly in lessons and other areas of the school. Most pupils say that they feel safe in school and free from issues of bullying. They feel well supported by staff, know where to turn if they need support and are confident that staff will listen and deal appropriately with any concerns.

Most pupils are happy and proud of their school. They show very positive attitudes to their learning. They settle in lessons quickly, concentrate well on their learning and focus effectively on tasks and activities. This contributes successfully to the ethos of effective learning in the school and has a positive effect on many pupils' progress and well-being.

Nearly all pupils take part in planning their termly topics. This results in most pupils displaying high levels of interest and engagement in their learning. They show an increasing ability to plan jointly and to express an opinion about what they want to

learn. When given the opportunity, many plan and carry out tasks with limited support. They understand that making mistakes is an important step in their learning. However, in a few classes, pupils are over reliant on teacher direction and do not make enough decisions about how they organize their work. By Year 6, many pupils are ambitious, confident, and independent learners. They persevere well with tasks and activities and seek alternative solutions when a first attempt fails.

Pupils, from an early age, are encouraged to reflect on their learning. They respond well to feedback from adults and their peers to improve their work and develop their skills further. Older pupils increasingly assess their own work and that of their peers and are keen to make changes to their work. This improves their self-confidence and supports their progress as they move through the school. As a result, by Year 6, most pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are progressing with their learning, to think for themselves what their next steps should be.

Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities that they are given to express their opinions about important aspects of school life and contribute to their own well-being and that of their peers successfully. Younger pupils are proud of their contribution as 'Happy Helpers' at breaktime and lunchtime. Many older pupils take on responsibilities, for example by acting as school ambassadors, and as members of pupil voice groups such as the school council, eco council and have a positive effect on the life and work of the school. They understand that they are representing the views of other pupils in the school community and take this role seriously. This helps to develop their confidence, resilience, and empathy for others, and gives them valuable insight into how decisions are made. The enthusiastic Criw Cymraeg are beginning to promote the use of Welsh, for example by sharing words and phrases of the week.

Most pupils have a clear understanding of the need for rules and the concept of fairness and equality. Older pupils involve themselves actively in discussions around human rights and the rights of the child. For example, they discuss the rights of Ukrainian refugees and reflect on the issues raised by the war. Annual social enterprise schemes enable pupils in each year group to become active in supporting local and national charities. Recent examples involved Year 1 pupils supporting the local food bank whilst Year 5 pupils, on learning of the devastating effect of cholera during the Tudor period were shocked to hear that cholera is still rife in many areas of the world. They resolved to raise money to support relevant charities. These initiatives have a positive effect on their awareness of the needs of others in their community and the wider world.

Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe when online, for example they know not to share their passwords. Many pupils understand the importance of looking after their own well-being. Healthy Eating Weeks and 'Eat them to defeat them' initiatives help inform them and encourage discussion about health issues. As a result, most pupils know how to make healthy choices in relation to eating and drinking. They explain the importance of drinking water and eating healthy snacks. Older pupils discuss the merits and disadvantages of different types of chocolate. They appreciate the importance of taking regular exercise, involving themselves actively in a range of active after-school clubs.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has a clear vision for learning that reflects the principles and culture of the Curriculum for Wales. Across the school, learning experiences promote the school's vision successfully and teachers provide a stimulating and imaginative curriculum that develops pupils' skills effectively. Leaders and teachers approach curriculum design in a reflective and collaborative way, refining their plans to consider the approaches best suited to their pupils. They are beginning to develop an understanding of assessments in line with Curriculum for Wales. This helps them to develop a shared understanding of progression in pupils' learning across the age range and to ensure that assessments are valid, accurate and reliable and inform next steps in teaching and learning effectively.

Teachers develop positive working relationships with pupils and create a warm, purposeful, calm, and supportive learning environment. This contributes to a purposeful working environment where pupils feel listened to and can ask questions if they need help with their learning. Teachers have good up to date subject knowledge and use a variety of effective teaching methods which motivate pupils to learn. Support staff work alongside teachers skilfully and contribute effectively to pupils' learning. Staff manage pupils' behaviour well ensuring most pupils are engaged and remain on task during lessons. In most classes, teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils and encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning. They use questioning well to move pupils' learning on and support understanding, according to the needs of pupils. This ensures that most pupils are appropriately challenged. In the few classes, where the teaching is less effective, teachers tend to guide activities too much which limits opportunities for pupils to decide for themselves how they organise and present their own work effectively.

Teachers of the youngest pupils provide exciting and purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their skills. They plan an effective balance of activities led by staff and opportunities for pupils to work independently in the learning areas both within the class and the outdoor area. Early opportunities to develop independent learning skills provide a sound basis for most pupils to make good progress as they move through the school. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 provide pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum and a worthwhile range of learning tasks that encourage pupils to explore and learn. There are regular opportunities for pupils to contribute to their own learning, such as discussing their ideas openly before starting on new themes. As a result, most pupils show enthusiasm and interest in all aspects of their work.

Teachers plan a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. They provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply their oracy, reading and writing skills, for example in their work on the novel 'The House by the Lake'. Teachers plan well to develop pupils' reading skills and provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to apply their higher-level reading skills, for example, skills when undertaking research into the life of Anne Frank and her diary. Across the age range, teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to develop

and apply their digital skills to support their wider learning, for example by recording their activities. They challenge pupils to utilise their research skills by posing open questions such as 'How does climate change affect different animals?'. Teachers of the youngest pupils plan purposeful opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills at an appropriate level across the curriculum. For example, pupils have opportunities to use money to buy and sell items in the role play area. However, teachers in Year 3 to 6 classes do not plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills at an appropriate level across the curriculum.

The school celebrates the language, culture and heritage of Wales as well as other countries. Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about their locality including the local woods, countryside, and coastal region. Each year group studies a different county in Wales and a different country in the world. This enables them to consider the sustainable goals to complement the topics they cover which include 'Wonderful World, Incredible Oceans and Eryri – Snowdonia'.

The development of pupils' Welsh language skills have regressed by missed opportunities arising from the pandemic. A minority of staff use basic Welsh vocabulary appropriately in the classroom, for example to give instructions to their pupils. Generally, however, teachers do not make the most of opportunities to model the language or encourage pupils to speak, ask and answer questions in Welsh. As a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding of Welsh vocabulary and sentence patterns is at a basic level which hampers their confidence to speak the language.

Care, support and guidance

Staff work hard to ensure that it provides a calm, caring, and nurturing environment where pupils feel safe, happy, and looked after. The school approached the significant challenges of the past two years with resilience, flexibility, and patience. Staff continue to have a relentless focus on pupil well-being. The school has increased its provision to support pupils' emotional health and well-being. Consequently, pupils feel comfortable in discussing any personal concerns to staff.

The school has received useful training and support for the transition to the new ALN system and have been successful in developing pupil-centred practice. Staff ensure that pupils with additional needs are well supported with interventions tailored to their individual needs. They provide specific literacy, numeracy and emotional support which helps these pupils gain in confidence, adopt a more positive attitude towards learning and to make sustained progress as they work towards their personal targets. Staff work closely with families and external agencies to plan appropriate, individual support and to measure its impact on progress.

There is strong focus on developing pupils' awareness of children's rights. As a result, nearly all pupils have a clear understanding of fairness, equality, and inclusion within their daily lives. The school's values on promoting honesty, fairness and friendship are well understood by the pupils and this has a positive impact on their attitudes and behaviour. The daily acts of worship, where pupils have time for reflection support spiritual and moral development well. Pupils are encouraged to ponder on ways of keeping their environment safe and respecting the lifestyles, religion, and culture of others.

Staff provide beneficial creative activities which provide pupils with opportunities to consider and respect different cultures, for example through painting patterns based on Aboriginal designs, or to understand the development of abstract art through reflecting on the work of Wassily Kandinsky. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to engage with the expressive arts, for example through designing visual backgrounds for a video based on Welsh mythology.

Various pupils voice groups such as the school council and eco council provide pupils with valuable opportunities to contribute towards the school's development. Teachers listen to their ideas, taking many on board, for example by providing more books for the school library and increasing opportunities for participation in sport.

Staff provide good opportunities for pupils to adopt a healthy and active lifestyle. As a result, nearly all pupils are aware of how to eat healthily. They participate eagerly in social and sporting activities such the annual school theatre production and the after-school football club.

The safeguarding culture is robust, and all staff understand their roles and responsibilities in contributing to pupils' safety and well-being. There is effective provision to support pupils to keep themselves safe when working online. The school has sound strategies in place to promote good pupil attendance including daily monitoring, regular communication with parents and follow up work supported by the local authority.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides strong leadership and a clear strategic direction for the school. She has a clear vision with an emphasis on well-being and developing pupils' life-long learning skills. The headteacher is well supported by the deputy and other leaders that promote the school's agreed vision and values and creating a strong caring, nurturing family ethos. Leaders model professional values and behaviour that contributes positively to effective collaboration and result in a strong team ethos. As a result, there is mutual respect between pupils and adults working at the school.

The headteacher's sensitive and efficient leadership through the pandemic has been reassuring for the whole school community and as she is steering the school competently through a period of educational change. There are effective systems and processes in place, so that all staff feel well informed and able to carry out their responsibilities appropriately. Regular communication and 'check ins' with families during periods of lockdown, further strengthened the strong relationships that exist between the staff, pupils, and parents.

Among leaders and staff, there is a strong awareness and commitment to address local and national priorities successfully. Leaders at all levels have created a positive safeguarding culture, where pupils and staff feel safe and valued. Staff work collaboratively to plan for the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales. For example, senior and middle leaders lead and support the development of areas of learning and experiences teams, which include teachers and support staff from across the age range, to develop a curriculum that meets the needs of their pupils. As a result, all staff have strengthened their awareness of pupils' development as they move through school. Pupil voice is respected, and their ideas are integrated

smoothly into teachers planning, which has an increasing focus on the 'Cynefin' across the school. Whilst planning for the development of the Welsh language and culture is a current priority, leaders have identified the need to provide further opportunities for pupils to confidently use their Welsh oracy skills outside the classroom.

Leaders know the school well. They gather and analyse a range of first-hand evidence that enables them to identify clearly what the school does well and priorities for further development. Leaders and staff make effective use of regular 'Tracker' meetings, to discuss individual pupil progress and well-being collaboratively. As a result, teachers know their pupils very well and identify their needs accurately. Leaders and staff agree priorities and devise relevant and realistic plans for improvement, such as developing the range and quality of its emotional well-being provision throughout the school. They correctly identified the impact of the pandemic on pupils' spelling, and reading skills, and put in place beneficial strategies which focus appropriately on spelling patterns and high frequency words. This has impacted positively on pupils' writing skills.

The headteacher ensures beneficial opportunities for staff to develop professionally at all levels. For example, a few staff have benefited significantly from access to sabbatical courses to develop their Welsh language skills. This has had a positive effect on their confidence in using the language. Staff also develop their leadership skills through aspiring headteacher and middle leader training. As a result, many lead areas of learning teams effectively to monitor the impact on pupils' learning. This contributes positively to the school improvement processes.

Collaborative working is a notable feature of the school. For example, building on the outcomes of a formative assessment action research project, the headteacher led on the consistency in presenting positive attitudes to learning across the cluster. This was integrated in the cluster transition project exploring 'What makes a healthy confident teenager?' This year, the headteacher led a project across the cluster to continue to collaborate purposefully to further develop the role of children's rights and learner voice in their schools and the wider community.

Governors are very supportive of the work of the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. They are well informed and have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They use their range of skills and expertise shrewdly to provide an appropriate level of support and challenge to leaders. Governors understand their legal responsibility in respect of promoting pupils' healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders monitor the school's financial resources robustly and make astute spending decisions linked to school priorities. They make purposeful use of additional grant funding, including the pupil development grant, to provide focused support programmes to help and encourage pupils' learning and well-being, together with additional support for promoting good pupil attendance.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer 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/carers 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' 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 (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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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