



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

A report on

Ysgol Felinfach

**Felinfach
Lampeter
SA48 8AE**

Date of inspection: December 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol Felinfach

Name of provider	Ysgol Felinfach
Local authority	Ceredigion County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	59
Pupils of statutory school age	45
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	5
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 over a three-year average in the primary sector is 23.7%)</i>	11.3%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 13.2%)</i>	13.3%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	51.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/06/2004
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	05/10/2015
Start date of inspection	04/12/2023
Ysgol Felinfach, Dihewyd and Ciliau Parc will be merging to create an area school in January 2025. The work on constructing the new school has begun on a field very close to Ysgol Felinfach.	

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

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- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Ysgol Felinfach is a happy, familial and welcoming community. Staff work together effectively to provide an inclusive and friendly ethos where pupils are polite and respectful. The school is a safe place and teachers and pupils undertake the role of caring for each other diligently.

Pupils have a positive attitude to their work and make sound progress from their starting points. Most pupils develop their numeracy, digital, creative and physical skills well and their work is displayed attractively and celebrated around the school. However, the reading skills of pupils at the top of the school are limited and this has an effect on their ability to write with sufficient richness and accuracy in a variety of genres. Staff have a sound understanding of each pupil's attainment and provide good oral feedback, which supports learning. However, the comments in their books do not provide pupils with clear enough guidance on how to improve their work.

Teachers work well with schools in the area to plan an inclusive and interesting curriculum that gives full consideration to pupils' interests. Most pupils respond with curiosity and motivation and show enjoyment in their learning. However, pupils are not always given enough opportunities to make choices about their learning and to develop to become independent learners. Staff foster a warm and supportive working relationship with pupils and identify pupils' needs well.

The school is led effectively. On the whole, leaders identify aspects of the school's work that are in need of improvement and the steps needed to realise this. They respond well to the views of stakeholders and this contributes successfully to the inclusive ethos that exists between the school and the wider community. Nearly all pupils enjoy being at Ysgol Felinfach, behave exceptionally well and treat each other, staff and visitors with respect.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the reading and writing skills of pupils at the top of the school
- R2 Ensure that teachers' feedback supports pupils to improve their work
- R3 Sharpen quality assurance procedures to ensure improvements in teaching and learning

What happens next

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

Main findings

Learning

On entry to the school, many pupils' skills are appropriate in terms of what is expected for their age and stage of development. As they move through the school, they make sound progress from their starting points, particularly in their oracy and numeracy skills. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make appropriate progress during their time at the school.

Most pupils have good oracy skills on entry to the school and many communicate naturally through the medium of Welsh by using rich language patterns. They speak with an increasing level of confidence and communicate meaningfully in clear sentences, for example when talking about a birthday party. As they move through the school, most pupils gain confidence and enjoy speaking in front of their peers. They hold mature conversations with adults and show an increasing grasp of rich vocabulary. They are natural Welsh speakers who converse maturely in their colourful local dialect.

Many of the youngest pupils develop a mature understanding of letter sounds and begin to connect them to form words. As they move through the school, many pupils show an enjoyment of reading. On the whole, they succeed in gathering information from the text and use this information to ask further questions. For example, when reading about the Arctic, they ask 'is it as cold in the Antarctic too?' However, the school's older pupils do not develop their reading skills robustly enough and this hinders their fluency and their ability to read meaningfully. In addition, the level of challenge within their books does not always match their ability.

Most pupils in the foundation learning phase develop early marking skills well and demonstrate some accuracy in terms of the form and shape of familiar letters. They begin to recognise the letters of the alphabet and make a good attempt when writing them independently. As they move through the school, many develop their understanding of sentence structure well and begin to write more extensively. A good example of this is the portrayal written about Dafydd Iwan, describing him as a 'joyful person who smiles from ear to ear'. By Years 5 and 6, a few pupils write with a suitable level of accuracy, using mutations naturally and punctuating appropriately. They show enthusiasm and engagement in their work. However, they do not always write richly and accurately enough in an appropriate range of genres.

The numeracy skills of many of the youngest pupils are very robust. They recognise the value of money up to 10 pence and use this knowledge appropriately when buying milk in the "shop". They have a sound understanding of number bonds up to 10 and count by 10 up to 100. By Year 2, most pupils use number strategies correctly. They have a good understanding of number facts up to 100 and can add and subtract 2-digit numbers correctly. Most complete tables and graphs confidently, for example when presenting information about the favourite sandwich filling of the children in the class. By Year 4, many pupils begin to apply their numeracy skills successfully. A good example of this is finding the area and perimeter of football pitches as part of the World Cup theme. In the school's older years, most pupils have a sound understanding of the four mathematical operations. They have a sound

grasp of number work and multiply 3-digit numbers by 2-digit numbers and have a good understanding of shape and space. Pupils across the school are given purposeful and interesting opportunities to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum. For example, after planning and constructing a new bridge, pupils at the top of the school experiment and discover how much weight can be placed on it before it bends.

The digital skills of many of the youngest pupils develop purposefully. They show pride when using an electronic tablet successfully to create a Christmas animation. They are able to control a programmable toy skilfully as they place the story of Cinderella in order as part of their theme. As they move through the school, many pupils' digital skills build successfully. They use the internet confidently to search for information and use the facts they have gathered to create presentations successfully, for example to show '*Taith y Llaeth*'.

Most pupils demonstrate sound creative skills. In the foundation learning classes, pupils create and decorate Diwali lamps and make an Advent wreath as part of Christmas celebrations. The oldest pupils build on their skills by creating portraits of Welsh celebrities as part of their work on Welsh Black History Month, in addition to emulating the work of a local artist successfully when creating drawings based on the theme '*Eira mân, eira mawr*'. The oldest pupils also take part in collective musical instrument lessons, including the violin and plastic wind instruments as a basis for learning to play brass instruments.

Most pupils develop physical skills with increasing confidence. The school's youngest pupils develop fine motor skills successfully by using tweezers to pick up pieces of cotton wool to match numbers to ten. They also show confidence and firm balance when cycling and using large equipment on the playground during break time. Pupils across the school engage enthusiastically with a variety of physical activities, which has a positive effect on their skills.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils' well-being skills develop well. The school's happy and welcoming environment contributes well to ensuring that nearly all pupils feel safe and valued. Warm and purposeful working relationships between staff and pupils ensure that they know who to turn to for help or support. Most pupils show an enthusiastic sense of pride towards their school and their community and communicate maturely and respectfully with each other, staff and visitors. As a result, they behave extremely well and the oldest pupils' care and empathy towards their peers is very mature.

Nearly all pupils are given beneficial opportunities to represent their peers through the pupil's voice council. Members meet regularly and support the school's work appropriately, for example by organising fundraising events and occasions for charities and discussing the content of relevant policies and strategies following the findings of the pupil well-being questionnaire. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to influence the work of the school directly by offering their own ideas.

Pupils across the school have a sound understanding of the importance of making sensible choices in terms of diet and a healthy lifestyle. All pupils receive a school lunch daily and most enjoy taking part in a good variety of learning experiences and

physical exercise sessions. For example, the youngest pupils enjoy using equipment such as bicycles and large toys on the playground during break time. As a result, nearly all pupils have a good awareness of the importance of keeping fit and commit to the suitable range of physical activities that are provided by the school.

Most pupils show a sound understanding of how to stay safe online, for example during a special day about how to use the internet safely. Pupils' attitudes to learning are one of the school's clear strengths.

The youngest pupils develop independent learning skills with increasing confidence, using and applying a good range of skills and previous learning successfully. As they progress through the school, they apply themselves well to their work and strive to do their best. Most concentrate for extended periods and contribute enthusiastically to class discussions. However, their independent learning skills and ability to take responsibility for their own learning at the top of the school have not developed strongly enough. As a result, they do not build on their skills effectively enough over time.

Nearly all pupils follow staff's guidance to complete tasks successfully. They work together effectively in pairs and groups and discuss and communicate appropriately, for example by supporting each other to solve problems and complete tasks in the foundation learning outdoor area. A good example of this is the purposeful co-operation between the youngest pupils as they build a stable for baby Jesus.

Most pupils respond well to teachers' questioning and oral feedback during lessons. They are beginning to respond appropriately to the new marking code by refining punctuation and identifying spelling errors.

Teaching and learning experiences

Teachers and assistants have a working relationship that supports pupils' education appropriately. They treat pupils equally and respectfully. This contributes successfully to the caring and inclusive ethos, which is a strong element of the school's provision. The learning environment supports learning appropriately, including examples of pupils' work on the classroom walls that celebrate their achievements and successes. On the whole, staff are good language models and communicate clearly, and encourage pupils to respond in Welsh.

Across the school, teachers present activities with stimulating and lively presentations. In the best practice, they ask probing questions, encourage pupils to think and capture most pupils' interest. Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to contribute ideas about what they would like to know and use this information appropriately when planning the next steps in their learning. However, teachers do not always provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to make choices about their learning and to develop as independent learners.

Staff provide beneficial oral feedback to encourage pupils to consider what they do well and how to improve their work. These discussions are purposeful and support pupils to develop their skills successfully. In the best practice, teachers' written feedback also provides beneficial guidance for pupils to improve their work. However,

teachers' feedback is not consistent and does not always support pupils to improve their work.

Foundation learning principles have been established appropriately and a range of beneficial experiences are provided for pupils in the indoor and outdoor learning areas, for example through the use of Father Christmas's shop to develop communication and numeracy skills and a visit to Cae Donci to learn more about the local area's wildlife.

Teachers work well with schools in the area to plan an inclusive and appropriate curriculum. They adapt it appropriately to ensure that it is up-to-date and responds to pupils' interests. On the whole, the school provides a suitable range of activities that develop pupils' numeracy and digital skills beneficially. As a result, most pupils develop their early skills soundly. Teachers plan purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills. For example, older pupils calculate the perimeters of football pitches as part of their World Cup theme. They provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop creative skills by emulating and working with local artists.

Staff promote pupils' understanding of their heritage very successfully, for example by celebrating T. Llew Jones day and an opportunity to perform at a local eisteddfod. Overall, they plan a suitable range of interesting activities and learning experiences that support pupils to write in different genres, for example by writing a portrayal of famous Welsh people or a poem about Gelert. However, they do not always provide opportunities for pupils to build on these skills purposefully enough over time.

Teachers provide parents with information about pupils' attainment on a regular basis, including evenings for pupils to share and celebrate their work with their parents and through annual reports.

The school enriches pupils' learning experiences with a range of visitors and visits. For example, a care worker discusses his work in the community and the local minister holds monthly services. Older pupils are given beneficial opportunities to attend the Urdd residential centre in a joint visit with peers from local schools. As a result, pupils develop strong relationships and links, particularly before they transition to secondary school.

Care, support and guidance

The close working relationship between staff and pupils leads to a caring and familial community, which ensures that nearly everyone is very proud of their school. The friendly and warm ethos supports the sense of belonging and encourages everyone to commit fully to caring for and respecting others. Teachers and assistants know the pupils very well and respond appropriately to their needs, including their emotional needs and well-being.

The school supports pupils with additional learning needs appropriately. The ALN co-ordinator has a clear and sound understanding of pupils' needs. They support staff regularly by organising or providing appropriate training and advice on interventions, which support pupils well. The headteacher and staff have a close working relationship with parents, which enriches discussions about their children's progress and needs. Overall, they have purposeful arrangements for identifying

pupils' needs at an early stage and provide them with suitable support. However, they do not always respond effectively enough to the needs of the very few pupils who need further support.

Staff review pupils' development regularly to ensure that they make progress against their personal targets. They work successfully with a variety of partnerships and agencies to support pupils, for example by working with the speech and language team to provide specialist support.

The school provides beneficial opportunities to celebrate and develop pupils' understanding of their local area, their culture and heritage. Beneficial visits to the village and the local area support their understanding of their learning activities effectively, for example as the youngest pupils visit the local shop to buy vegetables to cook soup. Pupils have also visited a local manor house recently to sing carols, which strengthens their link with the elderly in the area and the local community. Their Welshness is celebrated well by providing valuable opportunities to perform and compete successfully in various eisteddfodau. This supports their oral and creative skills and self-confidence effectively.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development strongly. Pupils are given valuable opportunities for collective worship, reflection and performing in front of their peers. Pupils treat others with respect and care during these beneficial periods, which reflect the school's ethos and values well. Pupils are given suitable opportunities to learn about other beliefs and religions by finding out more about their traditions and main celebrations. Overall, provision to develop pupils' awareness of the wider world, including awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion, has been developed appropriately. For example, pupils learn about children's rights by taking part in a range of beneficial activities based on the right of the month.

There are purposeful opportunities for pupils to influence decisions by taking part in a pupil's voice council. These arrangements ensure that all pupils in turn represent their class. In their meetings, they discuss a wide range of issues relating to the school's work and make a valuable contribution to activities such as raising money for various charities. However, they are not always given direct opportunities to propose and act on their own ideas.

There are robust arrangements for promoting pupils' punctuality and attendance. The school has a strong culture of safeguarding and there are robust systems in place to ensure that pupils are safe at school. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a firm and clear vision for the school which includes encouraging pupils to be respectful and to be proud of their heritage, community, traditions and language. The close partnership between all stakeholders is a strong element of the school. There is a welcoming, safe and happy community which, together, contributes to pupils' pride in belonging to the school and their positive attitude to learning.

Staff have an effective interactive relationship with parents which encourages them to be a key part of school life. The school responds well to parents' contributions, for example by making adjustments to the system for setting homework. The headteacher shares beneficial and timely information, which ensures that parents have an understanding of all the school's activities. Staff also work effectively with the wider community by planning a range of interesting experiences, for example spending time with the elderly people in the village making Christmas cards.

Leaders have a range of beneficial procedures to identify strengths and areas for improvement appropriately. They gather information from a wide range of sources and use this information sensibly to improve provision and pupils' standards. This has a positive effect on elements of provision. However, leaders do not always use self-evaluation findings, alongside wider information, effectively enough to set priorities and relevant steps for improvement. As a result, quality assurance procedures do not always ensure suitable improvements in some key aspects of teaching and learning.

The governing body is very supportive of the school and has a sound understanding of its priorities. Members receive termly reports from the headteacher which focus appropriately on the progress being made against the priorities. However, they have not returned to undertake a full role in the school's self-evaluation activities since the lockdown during the pandemic and this hinders their holistic understanding of provision. Members of the governing body work diligently to ensure that all pupils receive the support they need. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities, for example by ensuring appropriate arrangements for healthy eating and drinking.

Staff are very supportive of the headteacher and a good sense of teamwork permeates the school. Leaders have suitable arrangements to train and support staff's professional development, which links purposefully with the school's improvement priorities and their individual targets.

Leaders and staff work effectively with two local schools to develop agreed provision. Teachers take advantage of each other's expertise to plan their curriculum jointly. They meet regularly, share resources and support each other effectively to meet the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales. This ensures consistency in provision well during a period where it is planned to merge three schools to create an area school.

Leaders make sensible use of funding. They use the pupil development grant effectively to improve the support given to the youngest pupils. As a result, pupils are given a firm foundation for their early key skills. The school also uses grant funding to ensure that all pupils are given equal opportunities to go on visits, receive music lessons, swim and ensure that everyone has an appropriate school uniform. This contributes successfully to the caring family ethos which is a strong element of provision.

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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