



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

A report on

Ysgol Bryn Collen Llangollen

**Pengwern
Llangollen
LL20 8AR**

Date of inspection: February 2024

by

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

About Ysgol Bryn Collen Llangollen

Name of provider	Ysgol Bryn Collen Llangollen
Local authority	Denbighshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	156
Pupils of statutory school age	142
Number in nursery classes	14
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 23.7%)	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 13.2%)	3.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	3.8%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	16/11/2015
Start date of inspection	26/02/2024

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

The headteacher at Ysgol Bryn Collen provides strong, considerate leadership and knows the school well. She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and dedicated staff, who together form a very effective team. The school is an inclusive, welcoming, and happy learning community, which promotes well-being effectively.

The headteacher works diligently with staff and governors to secure improvements for the school. Together, they understand the school's strengths and areas for development and plan appropriate strategic actions to secure improvement.

Leaders and staff know the pupils well and use this information to ensure that all pupils are well cared for. Pupils are secure in their relationships with staff and as a result, their behaviour is excellent. Pupils and their families have a strong sense of pride in their school and nearly all pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Leaders and staff keep in close contact with the wider school community and build on the very positive relationships with parents.

The school's curriculum takes account of pupils' interest. Staff offer pupils a variety of learning experiences which help keep pupils engaged in their learning. As a result, most pupils including those with additional learning needs (ALN) engage well with their learning, make strong progress, and achieve well. Teachers support pupils to build on their learning suitably. They ask appropriate questions in class to check pupils' understanding and to move learning forward. However, in the older classes, teachers sometimes over-direct learning and this hinders pupils' independence, including knowing how to improve their own work. Teachers plan purposeful opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. However, pupils' Welsh language skills are less well developed.

Staff use the accommodation productively to meet pupils' needs purposefully and teachers often plan stimulating activities to promote learning. Provision for outdoor learning experiences is effective and focuses on improving pupils' skills through a range of stimulating learning activities.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that teaching consistently provides appropriate challenges for older pupils and that feedback helps them improve their work
- R2 Further develop opportunities for older pupils to make decisions about how they organise and present their work and to develop as independent learners
- R3 Strengthen the provision for the development of pupils' Welsh language skills

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), those with English as an additional language and those eligible for free school meals, make good progress in their learning from their starting points.

Younger pupils develop their listening and speaking skills well. They talk confidently about their work for example, when they build houses from tarpaulin and crates in the construction area. As they progress through the school, nearly all pupils make sound progress in their oracy, developing a varied and interesting spoken vocabulary. Older pupils confidently discuss how they take part in a wide range of activities to keep them fit and healthy.

Most pupils develop a love of reading from an early age. They use their reading skills effectively and apply them purposefully to support their learning. Most younger pupils use a range of strategies, such as phonics, successfully to read unfamiliar words. By the time pupils are in Year 6, most read a variety of texts competently. For example, they use information from non-fiction books and fact sheets when researching the formation of volcanoes effectively.

As pupils progress through the school, nearly all make sound progress in developing their writing skills. Younger pupils progress from early mark making to writing simple sentences effectively. By Year 2, many write independently, for example when retelling a well-known story book about a park keeper. Older pupils choose language appropriately for effect and adapt their writing style to different genres. For example, they use the features of a formal letter when writing a letter of complaint and choose subject specific language to describe the impact of tornadoes and hurricanes when they reach land. However, few pupils use their writing skills regularly enough in other areas of learning.

Many pupils across the school have a positive attitude to learning Welsh. Pupils in the Nursery and Reception classes respond well to class instructions by the teacher and sing songs in Welsh enthusiastically. By Year 2, many pupils use simple greetings and respond appropriately to questions about their likes and dislikes. As pupils progress through the school, many answer with basic responses during discussions with teachers and each other, for example when sharing personal information and discussing the weather. By Year 6, many pupils show an appropriate understanding of spoken language in familiar situations. However, overall, pupils do not make strong enough progress in developing their skills or use their Welsh language skills confidently enough in other areas of the curriculum and around the school.

Most pupils develop sound mathematical skills as they progress through the school. Many younger pupils count and form numbers to 10 correctly. They apply many of their number skills suitably in practical situations within and outside of the classroom, for example when counting the number of cups it takes to fill a jug with water. By Year 2, most pupils have a secure knowledge of number facts to 100. They collect data in a tally chart and represent it on a block graph successfully. Older pupils develop a sound understanding of place value. For example, by Year 4, most pupils understand and use numbers up to 1,000. By Year 6, most pupils are able to calculate fractions and understand manipulating numbers beyond one million. Older pupils use their numeracy skills well when measuring the length of shadows in the outdoor area.

Most pupils develop their digital skills well. Younger pupils complete simple matching games independently. By Year 2, pupils use a range of programmes effectively to produce and edit text. As pupils progress through the school, they develop a wider range of skills in data handling and create spreadsheets and interactive presentations appropriately to support their learning. For example, they create a spreadsheet to record information on natural disasters.

As they move through the school, most pupils develop their creative skills successfully. Pupils engage with a wide range of creative activities including painting, poetry and role play. Younger pupils express themselves well through art, drama and music when creating and performing a well-known story as part of their topic. Older pupils explore the outdoor area as part of their work on Victorians and use the natural resources in the environment to make Victorian wreaths.

Nearly all pupils develop their physical skills effectively. They play confidently on bikes and demonstrate good control as they balance along the tyre park. Most younger pupils respond positively when given opportunities to take part in dance and action songs. Older pupils take part in a wide range of sporting activities including swimming, and athletics. Consequently, pupils have a good understanding of the importance of exercise on maintaining their health and well-being.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils at Ysgol Bryn Collen feel happy and safe in school and know whom to approach if they have any concerns. They talk enthusiastically about their school with great pride and appreciate the caring relationships they have with staff. Pupils are friendly, respectful, and extremely caring towards their peers. Nearly all pupils discuss their feelings confidently on a daily basis and use the worry boxes within their class to share any concerns they have. They are confident that staff will listen to them, and this contributes successfully to pupils' emotional well-being.

Nearly all pupils have a clear understanding of the values the school promotes and understand that these contribute to their development as responsible citizens who show empathy to others. This contributes to the excellent behaviour of pupils.

Across the school, pupils are ready to learn. The youngest pupils show increasing independence as they engage in a range of stimulating, hands-on experiences. For example, they plant strawberry seeds, explaining the importance of covering the seeds with soil and watering them regularly. Older pupils develop increasing

confidence and concentrate for extended periods, contributing enthusiastically to class discussions. When given the opportunity, many carry out tasks with limited support. However, on occasion, pupils are over-reliant on adult direction and do not make enough decisions about how they organise and present their work. This limits the opportunities for pupils to think for themselves.

Nearly all pupils across the school have positive attitudes to learning. They participate enthusiastically in lessons and focus well when working independently and collaboratively. Pupils contribute to their learning effectively. For example, they suggest what topics they would like to study and share their thoughts with their peers and staff. Nearly all pupils respond to questions about their work during lessons. However, overall, due to the lack of opportunity, older pupils do not always use teacher feedback appropriately as a means of improving their work.

When given the opportunity most pupils, including those with ALN, are willing to assume responsibilities enthusiastically. They use these opportunities to develop their leadership skills through a range of pupil voice groups such as the School Council, Sports Ambassadors, the Eco Committee and Criw Cymraeg. They undertake their roles diligently and are beginning to influence the life and work of the school appropriately. For example, the eco committee raise money to place bird boxes around the school to provide food for birds during the winter months.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of equality and respect for others. For example, older pupils discuss children's rights meaningfully and the responsibilities that accompany them. They are keen to raise money for local and national charities and be part of a caring society. They are aware of the importance of sustainability and are considerate of the effect that people have on the environment. Older pupils have a mature understanding of the effect of natural disasters on communities and how humanitarian agencies and charities help during these times.

Pupils show a suitable understanding of diversity. For example, younger pupils study Ruby Bridges and older pupils study Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks as part of Black History Month. Older pupils organise and deliver their own class assembly with a focus on LGBTQ + to celebrate differences.

Most pupils understand the importance of eating a healthy balanced diet and taking regular exercise. They enjoy taking part in physical activities during lessons and many older pupils take advantage of additional opportunities to participate in after-school activities such as football and netball.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, staff have positive and caring relationships with pupils. They provide good role models and have high expectations of pupil behaviour and learning. Teaching assistants work alongside teachers skilfully and contribute effectively to planning and to pupils' learning and well-being.

Teachers provide a broad and balanced curriculum which builds systematically and coherently on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding, skills and experience. This ensures that most pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Staff know their pupils well and adjust teaching approaches to meet the needs of individual

pupils effectively. They work diligently to ensure that the classrooms and outdoor spaces are engaging environments and use a range of approaches inside and outdoors to support pupils' learning successfully.

Leaders and staff have worked successfully to develop the school's curriculum to meet the requirements of Curriculum for Wales. Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to contribute to planning the topics. They bring learning to life with visits and engaging experiences in school. For example, older pupils learn about Llys Dinas and Llyn Glaslyn, which ignites their curiosity and builds their enthusiasm to learn. In addition, teachers make good use of the local environment to create engaging learning experiences. For example, younger pupils visit a local farm to help them learn how to look after animals. However, learning activities do not always provide all pupils with sufficient opportunities to improve their independent learning skills and strategies.

Provision to develop pupils' listening, speaking, and reading skills is successful across the school. Teachers engage pupils with careful and concise questioning, and this provides opportunities for pupils to develop their oracy skills very well. They provide suitable activities for pupils to develop their writing skills. For example, younger pupils write a postcard to a character from a book they are studying. Older pupils are encouraged to reflect on what was the inspiration behind the paintings of a local artist. However, teachers do not always plan enough opportunities for pupils to write at length in other areas of the curriculum.

Teachers plan suitable activities for pupils to develop their digital skills in a range of contexts. As a result, younger pupils confidently record their work on mobile tablets and older pupils compile spreadsheets to support data handling. Provision to develop pupils' mathematical and numeracy skills is effective and teachers plan suitable opportunities for pupils to apply these skills across the curriculum at the appropriate level.

Staff make good use of the school's extensive grounds to develop pupils' learning. They ensure that younger pupils have access to a wide range of interesting activities to support their learning and physical development. For example, older pupils have the opportunity to use natural materials creatively to construct a volcano as part of their work on natural disasters.

Leaders and staff ensure that the curriculum reflects the nature and context of the school and learning activities reflect the cultural, linguistic, and diverse nature of Wales. Staff also provide valuable opportunities for pupils to discuss the diverse nature of the wider world. For example, younger pupils have developed valuable links with a school in Capetown and explored the different cultures of South Africa.

Most teachers use basic Welsh vocabulary appropriately in the classroom, for example to give instructions to pupils. They provide regular 'Helpwr Heddiw' sessions to develop pupils' vocabulary and sentence patterns and use strategies such as a 'Tocyn Iaith' award to encourage pupils to use more Welsh during the week. Generally, however, staff do not make the most of opportunities to model the language or encourage the pupils to speak, ask and answer questions in Welsh outside formal Welsh sessions. As a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding of

Welsh vocabulary are at a basic level, which hampers their confidence to speak the language in other areas of the curriculum.

Staff make good use of a commercial programme to develop and support pupils' well-being. This helps pupils to develop the skills and knowledge they need to make healthy lifestyle choices including healthy eating and drinking.

Teachers evaluate pupil progress effectively, including those with specific additional learning needs. They use a range of evidence from external and internal assessments well and this helps them identify pupils who need additional support quickly. Teacher comments on pupils' written work celebrates what pupils have achieved and, in many cases, asks appropriate questions to check understanding or encourage them to reflect on their learning. However, there are few examples of teacher feedback that indicates clearly what pupils needs to do to improve their learning.

Reports to parents and carers are informative. They report clearly on pupils' progress over the year. Parents are kept informed throughout the year via a range of digital media and at regular staff meetings.

Care, support and guidance

All staff contribute successfully to developing a happy, caring and safe community at Ysgol Bryn Collen. Staff set high expectations of pupils' behaviour and, as a result, pupils treat each other, staff and visitors in an extremely kind and polite manner. The family atmosphere in the school means that pupils are keen to attend, and this has had a positive influence on the school's attendance rate.

Staff have robust systems to identify and track pupils with ALN. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) works effectively with staff and outside agencies to meet the individual needs and targets of pupils with ALN successfully. This ensures that the school identifies individuals and groups of pupils in need of additional support from an early age. There is an open and honest relationship between the school and home, and this enables the school to provide valuable opportunities for pupils to benefit from effective targeted support. This contributes successfully to most pupils making sound progress towards their individual targets during their time at school.

Teaching assistants work effectively as part of robust arrangements to ensure that pupils with educational or emotional needs receive consistently good support to develop their skills successfully. This ensures that most pupils engage well with their learning and enjoy life at school.

Interesting educational visits related to class themes ensure that pupils develop their appreciation and understanding of Welsh identity, heritage and culture successfully. For example, staff plan valuable opportunities for pupils to visit Llangollen railway station to learn about the history and impact of rail in the local area. Younger pupils study a local artist and create paintings of Castell Dinas Bran in his style. The school provides valuable experiences for pupils to develop their knowledge of Welsh traditions through events such as the annual Eisteddfod. As a result, pupils have a sense of belonging to their community and Wales.

Staff are positive role models for pupils and promote values such as kindness and empathy well. The school ensures that pupils learn about equality and diversity effectively through the curriculum. Staff encourage pupils to respect and celebrate diversity successfully, for example through a range of activities entitled 'Everyone is different,' and marking Disability Month.

Provision for developing pupils' spiritual, moral, and ethical understanding is effective. Collective worship and classroom activities encourage pupils to reflect on their own values and beliefs effectively. Teachers regularly provide opportunities for pupils to lead discussions in assemblies about a variety of issues. For example, the healthy ambassadors share the importance of eating healthy snacks.

Across the school, pupils have valuable opportunities to participate in a variety of sport and leisure activities. For example, the school runs a range of after-school sports clubs and older pupils take part in cross country races and netball tournaments organised by the high school. These experiences foster pupils' self-confidence and develop their expressive and creative skills successfully. Pupils in Year 5/6 benefit from a residential trip to Llangranog, which allows them to build on their team building skills and increase their confidence.

Staff provide pupils with appropriate opportunities to develop as responsible citizens through a range of pupil voice groups. This provision enables pupils to take on responsibilities and contribute to the school effectively, for example raising money for local and national charities.

The school promotes a positive culture of safeguarding. There are strong procedures in place to monitor and ensure the safety of all. Staff use robust strategies to monitor and track the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and, as a result, attendance continues to improve.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides effective and thoughtful leadership, which ensures that the school has a clear strategic direction and promotes a close-knit and inclusive community. She has a clear vision based on, 'Nurture is in our Nature', for the school and conveys this vision successfully to staff, parents, governors, and pupils. This ensures that pupil well-being is at the heart of their work. Together, they create a happy, caring, learning environment where pupils work and play together confidently.

The headteacher has high expectations of herself and others. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher. Together they model professional values and behaviour that contribute purposefully to effective collaboration amongst staff. This results in a strong team ethic where dedicated, hardworking staff collaborate effectively. They have created a positive safeguarding culture and a welcoming, nurturing environment where pupils feel safe and valued. This leads to mutual support and respect between pupils and adults working at the school.

Leaders and staff have a thorough understanding of the needs of the pupils and local community and work with commitment to meet these needs. Together they create a stimulating and engaging learning community. At its core is a thoughtful and inclusive

culture that ensures that pupils feel a secure sense of belonging and develop the confidence and skills to engage positively with all learning experiences.

There is a strong awareness and commitment to address local and national priorities successfully. Staff work collaboratively to improve the attainment of pupils from low-income households and to implement Curriculum for Wales and Welsh Government's additional learning needs reforms. Thoughtful and well-considered planning ensures that the school addresses these priorities successfully. Short-term and longer-term goals are realistic and focus predominately on pupil outcomes.

Leaders know the school well. They have developed appropriate processes to evaluate its performance and to plan for improvement. They work effectively with staff to develop a collective responsibility for self-evaluation and school improvement. Staff show a strong commitment to promoting continuous and sustainable improvements. Arrangements to monitor and evaluate the school's work are well embedded and allow leaders to identify aspects that are most in need of improvement. Leaders have correctly identified the need to improve the attainment of specific groups of pupils, to improve pupils' Welsh language skills and to ensure that teacher feedback is effective in helping pupils to further improve their work. Staff hold regular meetings to consider individual pupils' progress, ensuring that pupils who are found to be underperforming are identified quickly and suitable provision is put in place.

Leaders ensure that all staff have purposeful opportunities to engage in professional learning, which impacts positively on their own development, the direction of the school and the outcomes for pupils. For example, four members of staff are currently attending courses to improve their Welsh language skills. Staff often undertake professional development with colleagues from local schools, for example to strengthen provision for developing pupils' digital skills. Staff reflect carefully on their training and welcome the regular opportunities to share their experiences with colleagues.

Leaders develop strong and effective links with parents and there is a combined commitment to supporting pupils' learning and well-being. This is strengthened by regular communication using digital platforms, which helps parents to understand how they can support their children's learning at home. Parents are consulted purposefully about the work of the school and feel that they are respected members of the school community.

The governing body is well informed and supports the work of the school well. The open and honest relationship between leaders and members of the governing body ensures that they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Members of the governing body visit the school regularly to take part in discussions with staff and pupils about elements of provision. This supports their understanding of current priorities and strengthens their involvement as critical friends. The governing body ensures that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily.

School leaders and governors manage the school's finances efficiently and deploy them sensibly in line with the priorities in the school improvement plan. They make purposeful use of additional grant funding, including the pupil development grant,

which is used wisely to provide focused support to help and encourage pupils' learning and well-being. Staff use the school's resources effectively to provide an engaging learning environment that supports teaching and learning and strengthens pupils' physical and mental well-being. They make regular use of the extensive school grounds, and the local environment to provide stimulating and creative opportunities for outdoor learning.

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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