



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

**Glasbury Road
Morrison
SA6 7PA**

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	City and County of Swansea
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Special
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	165
Pupils of statutory school age	112
Number in nursery classes	0
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 Maintained Special is 47 %)	42.9%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Maintained Special is 100%)	100%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	7%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/11/2014
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	13/06/2022
Ysgol Pen-y-Bryn is situated on two sites in Morriston and Penlan in Swansea and is maintained by the City and County of Swansea local authority. It is a special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and autistic spectrum conditions from four to 19 years. Pupils come from all areas of the City and County of Swansea with the exception of three pupils from other authorities.	

The school provides residential accommodation for a few pupils aged from 14 to 19 years.

Nearly all the pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

English is the predominant language of nearly all pupils. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language at home. There are a few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and a very few pupils for whom English is an additional language.

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

Ysgol Pen y Bryn is a happy and nurturing school. It provides effective and meaningful education for its pupils, which has a positive impact on their well-being and progress.

The school has responded and adapted well to the challenges of the pandemic. Leaders and teaching staff at the school have successfully re-established familiar routines and working relationships to support pupils and their families.

Teaching staff understand and respond well to pupils' additional learning and emotional needs. They support pupils sensitively with consistent classroom routines, which help pupils to understand and to predict what is happening around them and to self-regulate when they need to. As a result, most pupils engage well in learning and make effective progress from their initial starting points. Staff use assessment information effectively in planning support and to develop appropriate individual education targets and learning experiences for the pupils.

The school delivers a varied range of appropriate learning experiences that reflects the wide range of pupils' needs and abilities and develops their skills well. A notable feature of the provision is the school's film skills offer, which develops industry specific skills and allows opportunities for creative expression.

Overall, leadership roles are clear and are well understood with effective lines of communication between staff and their managers.

The new leadership team has strengthened arrangements for school evaluation.

Overall, the school environment is appropriate and is in a generally adequate state of repair. However, the outdoor learning environment is under resourced and is not appropriate to support the needs of the pupils at the school.

Recommendations

R1 Address the health and safety issues identified during the inspection

R2 Improve the quality of the outdoor learning environment

R3 Continue to strengthen self-evaluation arrangements and improvement planning

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 in relation to its film provision, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils at Ysgol Pen y Bryn make good progress due to the strong support and encouragement they receive from staff. In relation to their individual starting points, most learners meet their personal targets and make assured progress towards fulfilling their potential.

Most pupils make effective progress in developing their communication skills. Many pupils strengthen their communication successfully with signs or through other resources. A minority of pupils develop effective oracy skills and the confidence to use these successfully. For example, they discuss equality and diversity matters confidently. These pupils use technical language and subject relevant vocabulary well. Across the school, most pupils listen well to staff and to each other. They follow routines successfully.

Many pupils develop and improve their reading and writing skills appropriately. For example, pupils use suitable strategies to read single, familiar words and follow sentences with their finger. Older more able pupils enjoy choosing and reading books from a range of fiction and nonfiction texts. Many pupils enjoy listening to a story read by the teacher and respond well to questions. Pupils practise writing skills at levels appropriate to ability such as mark making, letter formation and writing short sentences. More able pupils present work appropriately and write with accurate punctuation. For example, they use these skills to write letters inviting others to their end of year prom.

Pupils use their developing numeracy skills well in a range of practical activities across the curriculum. For example, pupils with more complex needs count blocks in a tower. Many more able pupils identify, use and make calculations using money appropriately. They measure and weigh successfully. In addition, more able pupils collect information about their peers' favourite hobbies. They collate the data and record it in tally charts and bar graphs, accurately.

Many pupils make appropriate use of information technology (ICT) to support their learning. Over time, they develop these skills progressively. For example, nearly all pupils make choices on the interactive whiteboard and a majority use software to produce attractive information leaflets, creative books and films. Many more able pupils confidently use electronic tablets for a variety of purposes including researching subjects of special interest and for class related tasks. They successfully cut and paste weblinks and images into presentations.

A majority of pupils practise their Welsh language skills appropriately. However more able pupils do not develop these skills progressively.

Pupils make good progress in developing their social and emotional skills. For example, they learn to listen, follow instructions, take turns and co-operate with teaching staff and with each other. They respond politely and confidently to visitors at the school.

Many pupils develop their creative skills well through a range of activities. For example, they enjoy playing percussion instruments to accompany classroom songs and sing along happily and confidently to Welsh songs. Pupils produce attractive artwork including watercolour paintings, digital photography and digital art. Overall, pupils benefit greatly from the book and film enterprise initiative at the school. Through this work pupils develop their creative skills effectively, which range from acting to producing props and special effects.

Pupils develop their thinking skills well. For example, more able pupils produce exciting computer games as well as considering the positive impact on the environment by including environmentally friendly cars to the games.

Most pupils develop their self-confidence and resilience by taking part in a range of physical and outdoor activities to improve their physical skills. For example, pupils benefit from activities such as walking a mile a day, swimming, cycling and spin classes.

Older pupils develop worthwhile independence skills through activities such as shopping for food, preparing meals, making beds and washing clothes when accessing the school's valuable residential provision.

Nearly all older pupils gain a suitable range of qualifications appropriate to their abilities. These include qualifications at pre-entry level, entry level 1, 2 and 3 as well as level 1. Many older pupils are successful in gaining the Duke of Edinburgh's bronze award.

A very few pupils benefit from worthwhile work placements at local amenities such as at the Egyptian Centre at Swansea University and at a local creche and hair salon. This prepares pupils well for the next stage in their lives.

Over the last three years, all leavers successfully moved on to further education, training or employment.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils' well-being and attitudes to learning are strong. Nearly all pupils engage well with staff and their peers. Many pupils demonstrate understanding of individual difference and are supportive of one another. Pupils acknowledge their peers' successes and recommend them for reward points. Most pupils welcome visitors, hold doors open, are keen to introduce themselves and talk about their school. Most pupils feel safe and are happy in school.

As a result of clearly established routines, most pupils understand staff expectations in class and around the school. Positive relationships between staff and pupils allow pupils to express their feelings and needs including when they feel challenged. For example, pupils choose quiet spaces or request politely that adults do not engage with them. Most pupils demonstrate good behaviour in class, around the school buildings, and on the yard, including at lunchtimes in the dinner hall.

Most pupils arrive on time to lessons and settle quickly, are enthusiastic and attentive. Many pupils are able to wait, take turns and share. They engage well in lessons and respond positively to feedback and support. Around half of pupils move

between classes through the day. A minority of pupils move independently; very few require support but this is well managed by support staff. As a result, pupils develop their independence and resilience well.

Most pupils have beneficial opportunities to express their opinions. The head boy and head girl contribute meaningfully to governing body meetings. The school council develops targets for school improvement for leadership to consider, which include deadlines for action. Through the eco-committee a few pupils demonstrate their interest in sustainability by highlighting recycling opportunities at lunch time and through creative lessons using recycled materials. The school has recently introduced an initiative to support non-verbal pupils to participate more fully in pupil voice activity.

Most pupils enjoy the opportunity to develop their creativity, for example writing lyrics to a favourite pop song, choreographing, performing and videoing for a school event. Pupils are keen to share this work and talk about their contributions confidently.

Many pupils enjoy the adequate outdoor spaces and resources. The majority of pupils benefit from access to physical development sessions in lunch time clubs. A minority of these pupils continue to enjoy weekend sport sessions, which pupils are able to attend with siblings.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school provides pupils with a range of worthwhile learning experiences to support learning and the development of valuable skills in a variety of contexts. In particular, the school provides all pupils with the opportunity to learn film making skills, from acting to special effects, set design to costume making and music. This provision is a particular strength of the school.

Pupil needs are carefully considered when teachers and support staff plan the curriculum. This allows pupils to build upon previous skills and make progress in areas that are important to and for them, for example socialising with others, reading, and using software packages effectively.

Curriculum opportunities broaden as pupils progress through the school and result in all pupils gaining accreditation that is appropriate to them. For example, at Key Stages 4 and 5, pupil voice has contributed to the development of courses in construction and design and technology.

The school offers appropriate opportunities to visit the local and wider community to enhance pupils' experiences as they move through the school. This allows pupils to apply skills in a real-life context, which motivates them to engage. This includes, for example, a visit to the local football stadium.

The school has strong and worthwhile links with external partners. These links effectively enhance learning and support pupil progress. This is a notable feature in Key Stages 4 and 5, where pupils have been able to work with a digital photographer and a social enterprise. These experiences and others are used to enhance and support accreditation opportunities.

The school has an appropriate personal, social and health curriculum. Staff design the curriculum carefully to address issues such as healthy relationships, rights and responsibilities and staying safe. The school benefits from the support of external specialist agencies such as the local road safety officers.

The school provides a worthwhile range of opportunities for pupils to develop their physical health and well-being. The school has valuable access to a rugby hub officer who offers a range of opportunities including cycling, trampolining and a range of ball games. Pupils enjoy these experiences and are keen to participate.

Teachers and support staff have suitably high expectations of nearly all pupils and encourage them to be engaged and attempt new experiences that challenge them. Most support staff are used effectively to promote and to develop the standards that pupils achieve.

Over time, staff develop positive relationships with pupils and have a good understanding of their needs and abilities. This ensures that behaviour and learning is managed sensitively and effectively. Pupils are treated with respect and their needs are considered well by staff.

Staff use incidental Welsh appropriately in relation to pupil need and ability. Pupils are consistently prompted to offer greetings and other phrases as part of a wider communication approach. However, there are limited opportunities for a few learners to develop their independent use of the Welsh language.

A range of pupil assessments allow staff to track pupils' progress and to appropriately plan and deliver lessons that are generally well matched to the needs of pupils, for example, learning key words by locating them on the yard, a board game and via an ICT based quiz.

In nearly all cases staff are effective in developing the standards that pupils achieve. In addition, they intuitively support the emotional needs of pupils.

Teachers and support staff give feedback to pupils based upon their need and ability. This allows pupils to think about their work and amend as appropriate.

The school provides parents with a range of useful information that allows them to understand the progress that pupils are making. It provides a range of general information via a range of useful leaflets, informative end of year reports and person-centred reviews.

Care, support and guidance

Pen y Bryn is a calm and happy school. All staff understand and respond to pupils' additional learning and emotional needs well. They offer a close network of support that nurtures trusting working relationships. For example, during lessons they support pupils sensitively and calmly with consistent classroom routines, which help pupils to understand and predict what is happening around them. As a result, most pupils engage well in learning and settle quickly into the routines of the school day.

The school develops and maintains supportive relationships with parents and carers. The highly effective family engagement officer has a positive impact on family

engagement and well-being. In addition, the school keeps in touch with parents and carers daily using an electronic communication system, which includes a summary of the day and major achievements. These beneficial communication links provide a valuable opportunity for the school to celebrate pupils' successes and achievements in addition to being able to share any incidents that may impact on home life. In addition, the school has a good understanding of issues that may impact on pupil attendance and are able to work effectively to support pupils and their families. These supportive relationships have a very positive impact on pupils' participation and enjoyment of learning.

The school creates suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their cultural awareness. For example, pupils learning about Chinese New Year sampled Chinese food and the school arranged for Chinese students to visit from a local university. As a result, pupils develop an awareness of the world around them. In lessons and around the site, pupils are polite and show respect for their peers, staff and visitors, regardless of gender, race or additional needs.

The school provides useful personal plans for all pupils which are shared with relevant staff and parents. These include individual education plans (IEPs), pupil support plans and well-being action plans. The education team work collaboratively to produce these plans, which include valuable contributions from parents and carers and the pupils themselves. These plans contain a range of worthwhile strategies that focus appropriately on areas such as effective communication methods and life skills. As part of these plans, there are also detailed positive behaviour plans that outline suitable strategies to support pupils to self-regulate.

The school has a wide range of effective partnerships that enrich and support pupils' learning and well-being very successfully. In addition, the school has forged very strong links with the local community. It works very effectively alongside a number of community as well as national organisations, and this impacts positively on pupils' well-being and enriches their experiences. For example, partnerships are in place that allow pupils to develop skills and attributes in a range of real-life contexts such as working in cafes, creches and hair salons. Although some partnerships are still being re-established after the pandemic, the school has continued to provide valuable work experience opportunities for older pupils.

The school has a comprehensive and beneficial transition programme for new pupils to the school, which supports them in adapting to their new environment. The school provides worthwhile information and guidance regarding options available to pupils in their next steps. Close links with local colleges and other agencies enrich the provision in this area and strengthen transition arrangements from the school. As a result, pupils are well supported to access future learning and work-related experiences. However, transition between the different phases at the school is less well developed.

The school has a valuable residential provision available for a small number of older pupils on a regular basis. This provision provides pupils with valuable opportunities to continue to develop valuable life skills development and preparation for independence outside the normal school day. For example, pupils can complete household tasks such as making their beds, shop for their meals within an allocated budget and socialise with their peers in different environments.

The school offers pupils valuable opportunities to take part in decision-making about important aspects of school life and within the community such as the eco-committee and school council. However, important suggestions made by pupils about recycling and sustainability across the school are underdeveloped.

The school places a strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils are safe. It provides staff and pupils with relevant, appropriate information on how to keep themselves safe in all situations across the curriculum. The school's arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff are sound. All staff are aware of the safeguarding arrangements within the school.

During the inspection, a few health and safety issues relating to the outdoor spaces were identified. Many were addressed by the school before the end of the inspection.

Leadership and management

Ysgol Pen-y-Bryn continues to increase in size and the governing body has responded appropriately to the growing number of pupils and national education reforms by increasing the leadership capacity to meet both current and future needs. A recent restructure of the leadership team resulted in several new appointments at both the senior and middle leadership level.

Overall leaders display high levels of commitment to the school and its pupils. Leadership roles are generally well understood and there are clear lines of communication between staff and their managers.

The underpinning philosophy at the school is based on a set of values around community, ambition, respect, excitement, and safety. These values are generally reflected well in the work of the school and in pupils' learning.

The new leadership team has developed and strengthened arrangements to evaluate the work of the school. A recent monitoring and evaluation review considered the work of the school in relation to, for example, departmental action plans, middle leader reviews and learning walks. Where necessary appropriate action has been taken to further improve these. Leaders have continued to observe lessons over the past three years and have identified both strengths and areas for improvement. However, these overly focus on teaching and they do not focus well enough on the progress of pupils.

The school benefits from the critical friend role that governors provide. Governors draw on their wide experiences to support and where necessary challenge leaders. Governors have benefited from accompanied learning walks and share their collective findings with the governing body. For example, they report on the very positive relationships between staff and pupils, the use of signing and pupil engagement in lessons. In addition they question leaders on the challenge provided for abler pupils and pupils' understanding of their IEP targets.

Leaders provide governors with very useful updates on their areas of responsibility including the planning and implementation of the Curriculum for Wales and provision that supports the emotional well-being of pupils.

The school improvement committee oversees the work of the school in relation to improvement planning and is routinely provided with high level priorities for action. Whilst actions are clearly assigned the school does not systematically report to governors on those actions that have been completed and those that are to be carried forward. As a result, governors are not as well briefed on developments as they need to be.

The school has a range of worthwhile approaches and interventions to support the needs of pupils. However, leaders do not systematically analyse the impact of approaches and interventions and the reporting to the governing body on the impact of these is underdeveloped.

The school has recently strengthened its professional learning offer for all staff. There are suitable opportunities for staff to develop their understanding, knowledge and skills across a wide range of areas related to their role and aspiring role.

Leaders encourage all staff to understand their responsibilities to provide safe environment for all pupils with a wide range of varied and complex needs.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

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

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