

A report on

Ysgol Y Mynydd Du

**Ysgol Y Mynydd Du
Talgarth
Powys
LD3 0DQ**

Date of inspection: March 2025

by

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

About Ysgol Y Mynydd Du

Name of provider	Ysgol Y Mynydd Du
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	106
Pupils of statutory school age	93
Number in nursery classes	15
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 22.9%)	24.9%
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 11.1%)	45.2%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2023

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	24/02/2020
Start date of inspection	31/03/2025

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.

Summary

Pupils at Ysgol y Mynydd Du Primary School benefit from its kind and caring culture. Leaders and staff foster positive and nurturing working relationships with pupils. They establish a calm atmosphere to ensure that most pupils feel happy and safe, behave well and engage in their learning effectively. Leaders create a supportive team ethos where everyone feels valued. Governors understand the school well and support the headteacher suitably. Leaders value effective family and community links and endeavour to ensure that they are forming strong relationships with the majority of families.

Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those living in poverty, make suitable progress from their starting points. By the time they leave the school, most pupils' speaking and listening, reading, writing and numeracy skills develop well. However, pupils' Welsh language skills across the school are limited.

Many teachers engage pupils effectively in their learning with exciting and interesting activities. They use assessment effectively to plan lessons that help pupils develop a range of skills and make progress in their learning. In a few lessons, teachers over-direct the learning and do not allow pupils enough opportunities to develop their independence and creativity. Generally, teachers do not use outdoor learning spaces effectively to support pupils' learning.

Staff have created a curriculum that promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development well. They have established inclusive, effective provision for pupils with ALN and provide tailored support that meets individual pupils' needs well.

Leaders identify appropriate school improvement priorities but the school's work to improve pupils' Welsh language skills is under-developed. Staff work effectively with external agencies to support pupils and their families to improve attendance. However, levels of attendance remain too low and persistent absenteeism is too high.

Recommendations

We have made three recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1. Address inconsistencies in the quality of teaching to ensure that all pupils have access to high quality learning experiences
- R2. Improve pupils' Welsh language speaking skills
- R3. Continue to improve attendance

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Ysgol Y Mynydd Du is a school where leaders and staff thoughtfully create a caring ethos where each pupil is known well. Leaders and staff build nurturing, positive working relationships with pupils, creating a calm learning environment where most pupils feel safe, happy, and ready to learn. Staff model respectful behaviour, speak kindly, and use positive strategies to manage behaviour. As a result, most pupils behave well in lessons and develop positive and enthusiastic attitudes to learning. They form strong relationships with staff and with each other.

Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those from low-income households, make at least appropriate progress from their individual starting points. Staff provide sensitive support for pupils with specific social, and emotional needs and although a very few pupils need continued support to manage their behaviour, most pupils develop their social and emotional skills effectively.

Many teachers plan exciting and engaging lessons that hold pupils' interest well and meet their individual learning needs appropriately. Most pupils develop strong speaking and listening skills. They listen attentively and increasingly develop their vocabulary choices and confidence when speaking to others. Most pupils' reading skills develop effectively. Younger pupils develop secure strategies for attempting to read unfamiliar words. By Year 6, most pupils read fluently with expression and use punctuation to guide their reading appropriately. They enjoy reading and apply their literacy skills in other aspects of their learning effectively.

Generally, teachers build on pupils' writing skills effectively, and support pupils to use and apply these skills in different contexts well. Many younger pupils write independently using their early knowledge of letters and sounds. The oldest pupils write accurately in a range of genres showing a clear understanding of grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Most pupils make appropriate progress in developing their mathematical knowledge and understanding and apply effective strategies to solve mathematical problems. In a majority of lessons, teachers ensure that numeracy is well integrated in pupils' learning experiences across the curriculum. In a minority of classes, teachers do not generally plan opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills purposefully.

Overall teachers and staff use assessment effectively to plan lessons that help pupils build on their prior knowledge, skills and understanding. They provide purposeful feedback and engage pupils in worthwhile discussion about their learning. Most pupils respond appropriately to their feedback to improve their work. In a few lessons, teachers over-direct the learning and do not enable pupils to develop as effective independent learners, to be creative or to develop their own ideas to make the progress they could. Staff do not always make the best use of the school's extensive grounds to enhance learning in the outdoors.

The school has developed its inclusive curriculum appropriately to reflect Curriculum for Wales. For example, visitors, such as athletes, who talk about perseverance and resilience, enrich pupils' experiences in a worthwhile way. The school supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development well through projects, topics, and assemblies with local ministers. A minority of teachers model the Welsh language effectively, using simple commands that a few pupils understand and respond to using basic patterns. Overall, most pupils' Welsh language development is limited.

The school recognises the need to improve pupils' attendance and uses a few strategies, including working with outside agencies appropriately. However, although improving this year, attendance remains notably below the national average and persistent absenteeism also remains high. Pupils returning from exclusions or reduced timetables receive tailored support and benefit from collaboration between the school and external agencies. This approach is helping pupils to engage with school and is reducing exclusions over time.

Leaders ensure that pupils' well-being is a high priority. Staff provide the care pupils need, build strong working relationships with them and tailor support to meet their individual needs well. The school maintains productive partnerships with families, holding regular meetings to assess progress and plan next steps for learning and well-being. Leaders and staff offer inclusive, effective provision pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), ensuring that most make good progress towards their individual goals.

Leaders create a supportive team ethos where everyone feels valued. Governors understand the school well and support the headteacher suitably in shaping strategic priorities for the school. Safeguarding arrangements are appropriate, and the school maintains a strong safeguarding culture.

Leaders have appropriate systems in place to identify the schools strengths and where improvement is needed. Whilst they ensure that they focus suitably on the importance of national priorities such as ALN reform and improving the quality of teaching, pupils' progress in the Welsh language remains underdeveloped. Leaders draw on a range of first-hand evidence to monitor and evaluate progress towards the school's priorities for improvement. For example, leaders and staff have established a consistently effective approach to managing pupils' behaviour and enhanced the school's support for pupils' social and emotional needs through targeted professional development.

Leaders manage staff performance appropriately, providing constructive feedback that supports staff to improve their practice. They support staff to use research based professional learning and collaboration with local schools to bring about improvement that has a measurable impact on pupils' learning. For example, a recent focus on improving pupils' attitudes to reading has had a notable effect on older pupils' enthusiasm and supported them to develop a love of reading. Leaders are committed to strengthening relationships with families and the wider school community. They communicate through newsletters, social media, and school-based events appropriately to share pupils' learning and school life in general. These strategies are effective in keeping a majority of families well informed.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for site management do not give any cause for concern.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. ‘*most pupils...*’ or ‘*very few pupils...*’. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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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