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For learners, for Wales

A report on

Ysgol Y Foel

Ffordd Y Llan
Cilcain
Mold
Flintshire
CH7 5NW

Date of inspection: September 2026

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Ysgol Y Foel

Name of provider	Ysgol Y Foel
Local authority	Flintshire 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	38
Pupils of statutory school age	31
Number in nursery classes	6
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 21.7%)	*
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 9.2%)	*
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2016

Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/06/2019
Start date of inspection	21/09/2026

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

Ysgol y Foel is a happy, caring and welcoming school where pupils feel valued and secure and achieve well. Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to learning and show high levels of respect for others. The headteacher and governors provide strong leadership and ensure that the school plays an important role within its community. Partnerships with families, local businesses, community groups and places of worship enrich pupils' experiences well.

Most pupils, including those from low-income households and those with additional learning needs (ALN), make good progress from their starting points. Most pupils develop particularly strong speaking and listening skills. The school promotes the importance of reading well, and most pupils develop as confident readers and writers by the time they leave the school. Pupils apply both literacy and numeracy skills effectively across the curriculum. Recent improvements in mathematics provision have improved most pupils' mathematical reasoning skills.

In Welsh, younger pupils develop early sentence patterns and vocabulary quickly. However, older pupils have fewer opportunities to develop their Welsh conversational skills and lack confidence when speaking. The school promotes the Welsh culture well.

The school curriculum supports the development of pupils' social, physical and wider development suitably. However, overarching topics do not always match pupils' experiences and interests closely enough. Younger pupils have limited opportunities during lessons to explore, be curious and learn through play.

Teachers set clear and consistent expectations within the classroom. Generally, the pace of teaching and learning is good and teachers plan and adapt tasks appropriately to meet a range of needs and ability. However, there is a tendency for tasks to be overly adult directed, limiting pupils' independence and responsibility for their own learning.

Governors contribute effectively to improvement and staff well-being. The school currently faces financial challenges, which governors and leaders are addressing alongside the local authority.

Recommendations

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

R1 Ensure that provision for younger pupils supports progressive development through purposeful opportunities to explore, make choices and develop their skills

R2 Ensure that the curriculum is better matched to pupils' experiences and interests

R3 Improve pupils' Welsh oracy skills

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Ysgol y Foel is a happy and nurturing school. Warm relationships between staff and pupils contribute to a calm and caring ethos that enables pupils to feel secure, confident and ready to learn. Nearly all pupils demonstrate highly positive attitudes to learning. They are motivated to learn, behave well and show care and respect towards fellow pupils, staff and visitors.

The headteacher and governing body provide strong and strategic leadership. Their rigorous commitment to the school's vision ensures that the school is firmly embedded at the heart of the community.

Spotlight: Leaders enriching pupils' experiences through effective partnership work in the community

Leaders make effective use of strong community partnerships to enrich pupils' learning and experiences. Relationships with families, along with a wide range of local businesses, community groups and places of worship enhance the curriculum successfully and are a notable strength of the school. The school's Parent Teacher Association works closely with staff and governors, making a substantial contribution to the life of the school by raising

funds, helping to develop pupils' leadership skills and bringing families and community members together. Pupils benefit from a rich range of experiences that connect their learning meaningfully with their local community. The positive and caring relationships displayed between pupils of all ages, complement these partnerships well.

Leaders co-ordinate purposeful support for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), adapting provision skilfully to enable pupils to make progress. Effective multi-agency collaboration, combined with strong partnerships with families and other local schools, helps to ensure that pupils' individual needs are identified and addressed in a timely and effective fashion.

Nearly all pupils make strong progress in the development of their speaking and listening skills. Many of the youngest pupils speak confidently to friends and listen well to instructions from adults. Nearly all older pupils speak articulately on a range of topics, often using sophisticated vocabulary purposefully and with confidence.

The school promotes a love of reading well and provides pupils with access to a wide range of relevant novels and information texts. A structured approach to the teaching of reading ensures that most pupils develop early reading skills quickly. As reading fluency develops, staff pose effective questions to help improve pupils' comprehension and understanding of texts. By the time they leave school, most pupils read challenging texts with good understanding. Most pupils develop as capable writers. They write effectively for a range of purposes, using adventurous vocabulary and effective techniques to engage the reader well. Nearly all pupils take pride in the presentation and high quality of their writing.

Most pupils develop their mathematical skills effectively. Younger pupils develop secure basic mathematical skills which they build upon as they move through the school. Older pupils use the four operations confidently and articulate their numerical reasoning well.

Teachers ensure that pupils apply their literacy and numeracy skills regularly and in a variety of contexts. Most pupils demonstrate a strong range of skills, which they apply confidently and capably to enhance their wider learning.

Staff model the Welsh language appropriately. Younger pupils quickly develop a suitable range of Welsh vocabulary and sentence patterns. However, as pupils progress through the school, opportunities to engage in Welsh conversation reduce and older pupils' Welsh oracy skills are under-developed. Staff have recently increased opportunities for older pupils to speak Welsh but it is too early for this to have had sufficient impact.

Most pupils develop their digital skills appropriately. They use technology routinely and independently to support their work across the curriculum. Nearly all pupils develop a good understanding of online safety.

The school curriculum supports the development of pupils' social, physical and wider development suitably. Engagement with the local community helps to strengthen their understanding of Welsh culture, heritage and a sense of belonging well. Older pupils broaden their experience and understanding of current and important global issues successfully. Currently, the chosen topics are less relevant and accessible to younger pupils, limiting their engagement and progress. Leaders are working to address this.

Through assemblies and wider curriculum experiences, the school supports pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development effectively. Most pupils develop healthy attitudes, respectful relationships and a sound awareness of diversity. Nearly all pupils demonstrate consistently caring and respectful behaviour. In partnership with parents and carers, the school has developed its outdoor facilities and resources well. Pupils of all ages collaborate purposefully at breaktimes and lunchtimes to create games that make full use of the wide range resources available to them.

Nearly all pupils benefit from opportunities to develop their leadership skills in authentic contexts. Pupil groups, including the Criw Cymraeg and School Leaders, make a positive contribution to school life, ensuring that pupils' opinions are valued and acted upon. Overall, pupils are aware of their rights and how these relate to their lives and education.

Leaders provide all staff with a range of purposeful professional learning activities that link closely to school priorities. Where staff have a particular interest or expertise in a curriculum area or teaching approach, leaders recognise and harness this to support the development of others successfully.

Teachers set clear and appropriately high expectations within the classroom. The pace of teaching and learning is generally good and teachers plan and adapt tasks appropriately to meet a range of needs and ability. Nearly all teachers make regular and purposeful interventions during lessons to challenge pupils' thinking and extend their learning. They provide time for pupils to share their own knowledge and contribute to each other's ideas purposefully. However, there is a tendency for tasks to be overly adult directed which restricts pupils' ability to make independent choices and take responsibility for their own learning.

Provision for the youngest pupils supports the development of their self-care skills well. The indoor and outdoor learning environments enable pupils to engage purposefully in collaborative play at break and lunch times. During lessons, the outdoor areas are under-

used which restricts pupils' ability to explore, be curious and develop an appropriate understanding of themselves and the world.

Leaders have robust processes for tracking and monitoring pupils' attendance. Close relationships between school and home enable staff to identify attendance concerns and provide any necessary support promptly.

Leaders set and model high expectations for both staff and pupils and processes to monitor teaching and to track pupil progress are robust. They evaluate the work of the school well, incorporating the views of all partner groups. Leaders work strategically and swiftly to bring about necessary changes to important aspects of the school's work, securing a good track record of improvements over time.

Governors support the school well, drawing upon a wide range of skills and experience to support their work. They carry out their link roles with increasing knowledge and understanding, supporting school improvement and staff well-being effectively

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. The school is currently facing financial challenges. The headteacher and governing body are working closely with the local authority to address these.

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

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.

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