



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

A report on

**Ysgol Y Faenol
John's Drive
Bodelwyddan
Nr. Rhyl
Denbighshire
LL18 5TG**

Date of inspection: October 2017

by

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

About Ysgol Y Faenol

Ysgol Y Faenol is in the village of Bodelwyddan, about four miles east of Abergele. Most pupils live in the village and its outlying area. Families frequently move into and out of the area and, as a result, there is considerable movement into and out of the school.

There are currently 154 pupils on roll, including 21 pupils who attend the nursery on a part-time basis. Pupils are taught in five mixed age classes.

Very few pupils speak Welsh as their first language and around 10% are learning English as an additional language. Around 15% of pupils come from ethnic-minority backgrounds and around 22% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is slightly higher than the average for Wales of 19%. The school has identified 26% of pupils as having additional learning needs, which is slightly higher than the national average of 21%.

The present headteacher has been in post since January 2008. The school was last inspected in May 2012.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

During their time in the school, most pupils make good progress from their starting points and a few pupils make very good progress. By the end of key stage 2, they are confident, thoughtful and articulate and enjoy learning. They have a deep understanding of mathematical concepts and apply their knowledge of these well to solve mathematical problems. They apply their literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills well across the curriculum and take pride in their school and their work.

In general, teachers provide interesting learning experiences that help pupils develop a love of learning. These are often linked to interesting and thought-provoking story-books that help pupils explore a wide range of topics and emotions. However, in the foundation phase, pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their skills independently.

The headteacher is passionate about meeting individual pupils' needs and seeing pupils mature into fully rounded, capable learners. Staff work together to support this vision effectively. The school is outward looking and makes the most of research and professional development opportunities to improve standards of teaching and learning. The school uses its pupil development grant particularly well to support vulnerable pupils. The governing body is very supportive of the school's work.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Adequate and needs improvement
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that all staff working in the foundation phase have a thorough understanding of foundation phase pedagogy and provide effective learning experiences for pupils
- R2 Plan carefully to ensure that pupils in the foundation phase have rich opportunities to learn through play
- R3 Improve the quality of the foundation phase learning environment indoors and outside
- R4 Improve pupils' use of Welsh so that they become more confident in using the language outside of lessons

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

A majority of pupils start school with skills that are lower than expected for their age. Most pupils make good progress and a very few pupils make very good progress as they move through the school.

By Year 6, most pupils communicate confidently. Pupils develop their early speaking skills well in the foundation phase, often from a low starting point. For example, by the end of the foundation phase they describe their study about Romans with excitement and enthusiasm using appropriate vocabulary. Many pupils in key stage 2 speak fluently for different purposes. They provide effective voice-overs for short videos describing the Easter story, using good intonation and expression. In the foundation phase, many pupils develop their early understanding of letter sounds effectively and, by Year 2, many write for a range of purposes. For example, they use simple punctuation and expressive language successfully to write a lively newspaper account of the volcano eruption in Iceland. By the end of key stage 2, many pupils develop strong writing techniques and their work shows a love of language. They think of catchy titles for newspaper articles and write moving first person narrative accounts. Throughout the school, many pupils develop worthwhile reading skills and use them well in the classroom. By the end of Year 2, pupils apply their phonic knowledge effectively to decipher unfamiliar words. By Year 6, pupils read challenging texts together and discuss the plot and characters with interest and maturity. Across the school, most pupils apply the skills they learn in English successfully in other subject areas.

Most pupils achieve well in mathematics and many more able pupils develop a deep understanding of mathematical processes by the end of Year 6. In the foundation phase, pupils develop their understanding of place value well. By Year 2, they carry out calculations successfully using two digit numbers. They use block graphs and tally charts to represent data effectively, such as showing the difference in weather patterns in Cardiff and the Amazon, and deal with negative numbers confidently. In key stage 2, many pupils work independently to solve increasingly complex number problems. For example, they use their understanding of numbers to find the average drop time for parachutes when investigating forces, and produce accurate and detailed line graphs to monitor the growth rate of a variety of plants over a given time. Across the school, pupils tackle number problems confidently and apply their skills across other subject areas well.

Throughout the school, pupils develop age appropriate ICT skills and use them well in other subjects. Pupils in Year 2 access their folders independently using good mouse control. They use word processing software creatively, for example to change font colour and insert pictures to enhance their work. In key stage 2, pupils research topics and prepare presentations skilfully, using animation to capture the interest of the audience. By Year 6, pupils build simple games and programs skilfully. They are beginning to become familiar with spreadsheets and use databases to record their findings as part of their topic work.

Many pupils make suitable progress in developing their Welsh language skills. The youngest pupils join in singing Welsh songs and rhymes enthusiastically and learn simple Welsh words and phrases. By Year 2, pupils respond to simple questions about themselves with growing confidence. In key stage 2, pupils make appropriate progress. They begin to use the past tense and talk about their likes and dislikes. Pupils write for a suitable range of purposes and most pupils read what they have written with understanding, but they approach unfamiliar scripts with less confidence. In general, pupils do not practice their Welsh language skills throughout the school day well enough to develop their skills systematically.

Pupils eligible for free school meals, those with additional learning needs and pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress from their starting points. However, boys do not always make enough progress when compared with girls, particularly in the foundation phase and among the more able in English and mathematics in key stage 2.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Across the school, pupils develop strong attitudes and behaviours to help them learn throughout their lives. Pupils are proud of their school. Older pupils talk enthusiastically about their learning and enjoy the topics they study. They take a positive approach to challenging work, and are not afraid to have a go. They have a sound understanding of strategies to use to help them solve problems, which include turning to others for advice. As pupils move through the school, they become more skilful at identifying how to improve their own work and help others to do the same. They co-operate well with one another and work together effectively to fulfil tasks independently. Pupils show respect towards one another in class and value each other's contributions to discussions. They concentrate well on tasks that interest them and persevere when they face difficulties. As a result, by the end of key stage 2, pupils develop well as ambitious, confident, capable and independent learners.

Most pupils behave well in their classes and as they move through the school. They respond well to adult directions and understand the school's behaviour policy. They are polite to visitors and considerate to one another. Most pupils work in a range of ways successfully, including in small groups and on their own. Groups of pupils receiving support make good progress with developing their social and emotional skills and their self-esteem over time. They benefit from opportunities to spend time outdoors or to take part in creative activities including craft and dance.

Most pupils understand which foods help them to keep healthy, and many talk knowledgably about this, such as when Year 4 pupils design a poster to explain healthy and less healthy choices to their peers. Many pupils are enthusiastic about their physical education lessons and run around energetically at break times. Many pupils develop their confidence and resilience well. They talk positively about feeling safe in school and are confident that staff will deal with any unpleasant behaviour decisively.

Pupils are developing well as ethical, informed citizens. They learn to take on responsibilities such as taking a turn as helpwr heddiw in the foundation phase. Older pupils take their duties as digital leaders seriously. They are proud of their role in helping fellow pupils and staff develop their ICT skills effectively. Pupils are

beginning to understand how they can contribute to living sustainably, such as when they grow fruit and vegetables in the school garden and make compost from food waste. However, they do not always build on this learning consistently enough to develop a deep understanding. There is a strong emphasis in the school on encouraging fairness, equality and tolerance of others and pupils respond positively to this. For example, they learn about important values such as respect as part of their project work looking at human rights.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Overall, the quality of teaching is adequate and needs improvement. Where teaching is strong, teachers engage pupils' interest consistently well and help them develop a love of learning. They support pupils effectively to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding over time. They meet the needs of different groups of learners effectively, challenge and extend more able pupils successfully and promote deep learning. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and develop strong working relationships that help them settle to their work well. They plan lessons carefully to ensure that pupils make regular progress, particularly as they develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. There is a strong focus on enabling pupils to develop effective thinking and problem solving skills throughout the school. However, in the foundation phase, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to explore and experiment freely. Not all practitioners have a strong enough understanding of foundation phase pedagogy to support good quality learning through play.

Most teachers provide good quality feedback during lessons to make sure that pupils understand their tasks and how they can improve their work. In many classes, teachers question pupils skilfully to help extend their understanding and monitor their learning. However, at times, practitioners do not question pupils skilfully enough to help them make progress. Most teachers explain learning objectives clearly, so that pupils have a good understanding of what they are hoping to achieve. They involve pupils effectively in their learning by encouraging them to set their own success criteria, and teaching them to assess their own work and the work of their peers successfully. This helps to develop their independent learning skills effectively. In many classes, teaching assistants provide valuable support to individuals and groups of pupils. However, in a few classes, teachers do not always direct teaching assistants well enough for them to help pupils make the best progress.

In key stage 2, teachers work together to plan a broad, balanced and engaging curriculum. They identify stimulating topics that link to interesting story books, and study these in depth. This provides purposeful opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in meaningful contexts. These topics inspire pupils with a love of learning and help them to become ambitious, confident, and well-informed learners. For example, pupils study cocoa farming as part of their recent topic about chocolate, helping them learn about the climate in different countries, as well as providing an opportunity to carry out careful experiments to find out how quickly different types of chocolate melt. Older pupils consider difficult emotions such as grief linked to their text. Teachers use a range of teaching strategies that motivate pupils and meet their individual needs well. For example, pupils often work in pairs or small groups to co-operate on tasks and learn from each other. This helps to create a purposeful working atmosphere in the school.

In the foundation phase, teachers plan useful focused learning activities that help children develop their emerging literacy and numeracy skills across all areas of learning. However, teachers do not plan well enough for pupils to practise and embed their skills and follow their own interests in the indoor and outdoor learning environments.

There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills progressively in lessons. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise and embed their Welsh language skills outside the classroom.

The school takes good account of the literacy and numeracy framework in planning pupils' learning experiences. This ensures that pupils make good progress over time. Planning to develop pupils' ICT skills is progressive and links well to topics, providing pupils with valuable opportunities to practise their ICT skills in meaningful contexts.

Care, support and guidance: Good

There is a strong caring and nurturing ethos in the school, and all pupils are valued. The school places a strong emphasis on supporting pupils' wellbeing as well as their academic achievement and, as a result, pupils develop a particularly positive attitude to learning.

The school uses a wide range of data very effectively to assess and track individual pupils' wellbeing and progress and to identify their particular needs. As a result, staff know their pupils well and provide effective additional support or challenge for individuals and groups of learners. For example, the school tracks the relatively high percentage of pupils who move into the school at different times carefully and supports them so that they settle well and make at least appropriate progress. The headteacher seeks out different approaches to help individuals and groups improve their skills. This has led to measureable improvements across the school, such as in young pupils' language and communication skills, in the numeracy skills of pupils new to the school and in individual pupils' reading skills over time.

There are thorough arrangements to support pupils with identified additional learning needs. These include useful individual education plans that identify appropriate targets and have manageable steps towards achieving these. They also include valuable support for pupils' social, emotional and creative development, for example through craft and dance and outdoor activities that the pupils enjoy. This builds their resilience and develops positive attitudes to learning successfully.

The school works hard to involve parents in their children's education. It does this successfully through its welcoming environment and by sharing information effectively, for example through the school's attractive and informative website. Parents appreciate the practical workshops where they learn how their children practise and develop a range of skills through interesting topics indoors and outside. They value opportunities to discuss concerns informally during coffee and chat sessions. The school recently reviewed its approach to homework, and parents and pupils speak enthusiastically about working together on projects such as how to build a Celtic roundhouse and a working model of a volcano.

There are good opportunities for pupils to learn about keeping themselves safe and living a healthy lifestyle. These include regular encouragements to eat fruit and take part in outdoor physical activities. Police liaison officers visit the school to teach about appropriate awareness of drugs and alcohol. There is a well-established behaviour policy, which is reinforced consistently. This leads to good working relationships across the school.

The school's broad curriculum gives good attention to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It helps to prepare them well to become active citizens and develops important values such as tolerance and respect effectively. For example, through learning about influential thinkers and political activists such as Nelson Mandela and Malala Yousafzai, pupils have worthwhile opportunities to learn about freedom, justice and human rights. The high expectations and inclusive behaviour modelled by school staff support pupils to develop values such as honesty and fairness successfully. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to learn to make decisions and take on responsibilities as members of the school council, eco-committee or as digital leaders. This contributes significantly to their self-esteem and wellbeing. There are useful opportunities for groups of pupils to learn about different work places when they reach Year 6, raising their aspirations effectively.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher has a powerful vision to provide all pupils with the skills and attitudes they need to become lifelong learners. She communicates the vision successfully across the school community and staff support this well. The headteacher has high expectations of staff, pupils and herself. This positive ethos permeates the school and ensures that staff fulfil their roles and responsibilities effectively and conscientiously.

The governors support the school well. They receive useful information about the school's performance from the headteacher and visit the school regularly. This helps them to develop a sound understanding of its main strengths and weaknesses. As a result, governors are beginning to challenge the school purposefully about pupils' standards and the quality of the provision.

There is a strong culture of continuous improvement in the school built around successful self-evaluation, improvement planning and continuous professional learning. The school involves all stakeholders meaningfully in evaluating its work and makes very good use of data to identify strengths and areas for improvement. As a result, leaders identify development priorities that lead to effective improvements in standards and provision over time. For example, staff implement a consistent and successful approach to assessment for learning across the school, which helps pupils develop well as resilient and independent learners. Recently, leaders have focused effectively on raising standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the school. They have also concentrated on developing mature thinking, problem solving and independent learning skills by the time pupils reach Year 6. In its most recent evaluation, the school identified that it needs to improve the balance between child-initiated and adult directed learning in the foundation phase. However, this has not had time to have an impact of the school's work yet.

The school is outward looking and the headteacher actively encourages staff to take part in professional research and dialogue to develop their understanding of teaching and learning. Staff regularly take part in whole staff discussion, team teaching, peer teaching and school-to-school working. This is a strong feature and helps staff develop as reflective practitioners. It enables them to develop a number of effective teaching strategies to improve standards in literacy and numeracy as well as ways to support pupils' wellbeing and resilience. Staff work well with other schools to share this practice constructively. There are appropriate performance management procedures that identify teachers' individual strengths and areas for development.

In general, the school uses its indoor and outdoor environment well to support pupils' learning. For example, groups of pupils benefit from using the well-resourced ICT suite, welcoming library, outdoor stage area and interesting forest school. The school has recently begun to improve the quality of the indoor and outdoor learning environments in the foundation phase to allow more opportunities for pupils to practise their skills and follow their own interests independently. However, this is at a very early stage of development.

The school uses its pupil development grant highly effectively. Staff know their most vulnerable pupils very well and make sensitive decisions to support them. For example, the school hires bikes for vulnerable pupils so that they can learn to ride them alongside their peers. They employ staff to provide worthwhile opportunities outside school such as a visit to a local factory where pupils learned how a company works and how to make soap. Pupils worked together to produce a presentation for their peers, staff, parents and the wider community. The activity had a significant impact on learner confidence and led to a deeper understanding about the world of work. This is a particular strength of the school.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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