



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

A report on

**Ysgol Y Foel
Ffordd Y Llan
Cilcain
Mold
Flintshire
CH7 5NW**

Date of inspection: June 2019

by

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

About Ysgol Y Foel

Ysgol Y Foel is in Cilcain, near Mold in Flintshire. The school has 43 pupils aged between 3 and 11, including six pupils who attend the nursery on a part-time basis. Pupils are taught in two classes.

The school's three-year average for pupils eligible for free school meals is around 2%. This is well below the average for Wales (18%). The school identifies that around 12% of its pupils have additional learning needs, which is below the Welsh average of 21%. Nearly all pupils are of white British ethnicity and come from homes where English is the main language. No pupils speak Welsh at home.

The headteacher took up her post in September 2016. The school's last inspection was in 2011.

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

Ysgol Y Foel is a welcoming community that provides a nurturing environment for its pupils. Nearly all pupils enjoy their learning and participate enthusiastically in lessons. Most make strong progress in developing a good range of skills that they use in activities across the areas of learning effectively.

The positive relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are a strength of the school. All pupils behave very well. They show fairness, tolerance and respect to others. Teachers use a variety of stimulating activities to capture the interest of pupils successfully. They monitor pupils' progress closely and provide valuable additional support to pupils when needed.

The headteacher provides a firm strategic direction for the school. Staff, parents and governors share a common purpose and work well together. Leaders provide a clear focus for improvement and review progress robustly. The school makes worthwhile use of partnerships with other schools to develop the expertise of staff and enrich its curriculum.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Increase pupils' use of spoken Welsh in and outside lessons
- R2 Provide greater opportunity for pupils to make choices about the direction of the own learning
- R3 Strengthen the decision-making of pupil leadership groups
- R4 Extend the range of opportunities for outdoor learning

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

Most pupils enter school with literacy, numeracy and social skills at or above the level expected for their age. Nearly all pupils make good progress as they move through the school and achieve well by Year 6.

Across the foundation phase, nearly all pupils listen well. Many ask relevant questions to gather further information. By Year 2, many pupils use a wide vocabulary when discussing their work with a partner, for instance, to describe how they are making their butterfly painting 'symmetrical'. Most pupils in key stage 2 participate maturely in discussions. They listen respectfully to the views of others and contribute relevant comments supported by reasons, for example when debating the possibility that evidence of the 1969 moon landing is fake.

Most pupils in the foundation phase make good progress in developing their reading skills. Many pupils in reception use their knowledge of letter sounds to read and label body parts of an insect accurately. By Year 2, most pupils use their comprehension skills successfully to respond correctly to questions about a variety of texts. Across key stage 2, most pupils use higher order reading skills successfully. For example, they scan and skim pages to locate specific information effectively. By Year 6, nearly all pupils are confident readers. Many reflect thoughtfully on character's actions to infer their motives using evidence from the text to justify their thinking.

In the foundation phase, most pupils make good progress in developing their early writing skills. Many pupils in Year 1 form letters correctly and write sentences with appropriate spaces between words and accurate basic punctuation. By Year 2, most pupils sustain their writing well. Many use vocabulary precisely, for example writing about scientists and meteorites when retelling a familiar story as part of their space topic. Most pupils in key stage 2 match the style of their writing to its purpose appropriately, for example including vivid descriptive phrases and imagery when rewriting a traditional African tale. More able writers vary sentence structures and use a variety of punctuation to add interest to their writing. They use a lively, conversational tone to convey the thoughts of a character very effectively when writing a letter home in the role of a child in their class novel.

Across the school, most pupils make appropriate progress in developing their use of spoken Welsh during lessons. Most use familiar sentence patterns correctly and respond appropriately to simple questions when prompted. However, most pupils' use of spoken Welsh outside lessons is limited and too many pupils lack confidence to speak Welsh readily in everyday activities. As they move through the school, most pupils read and write in Welsh at an appropriate level. For example, pupils in the foundation phase use short sentences to describe aliens and Year 6 pupils write a well-organised recount of their trip to Blist Hill Victorian town.

Most pupils in the foundation phase develop their mathematical skills well. They apply their learning across the curriculum effectively, for example to survey the popularity of different mini-beasts and to plot their findings using a graphing

programme. By Year 2, most pupils add and subtract two-digit numbers accurately and use their mental maths skills to find multiples and doubles efficiently. In key stage 2, most pupils use a range of written methods confidently. For example, they calculate the mean of data based on the wingspan of different birds and investigate the cost and practicality of travelling to Scotland to visit characters in a class novel about an endangered bird of prey. By Year 6, most pupils present and analyse data effectively. They use a variety of measures confidently to make a scaled two-dimensional model of the solar system.

Most pupils develop good skills in information and communication technology (ICT). By the end of the foundation phase, they use a wide range of applications on tablet computers to support their learning confidently. For example, they create pictures, present data and use simple coding to control programmable toys as part of their topic work on mini-beasts. In key stage 2, most pupils construct and question databases successfully. They search for information online purposefully and use a video editing app effectively to create films about their space topic for screening in a local theatre. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 produce a very informative presentation on the four purposes of the new curriculum for Wales that they share with parents, governors and other schools.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils demonstrate respect and tolerance towards each other in classes and on the playground. The positive interaction and strong levels of collaboration amongst pupils of all ages, at work and play, is a strong feature of the school. Pupils' behaviour is of a consistently high standard. Nearly all pupils move quietly and calmly around the school.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school. They are confident that adults and other pupils will help them if they have a problem. They are clear about what steps to take if they find their work difficult. For example, they may ask the person sitting next to them, check the board or think a little more before asking the teacher. Nearly all pupils enjoy their learning and participate in lessons enthusiastically. From an early age, they show a very positive attitude towards their work and persevere with their tasks well. Nearly all pupils focus well in lessons and act responsibly. Most show high expectations for their learning. Nearly all pupils engage confidently with unfamiliar adults and with new experiences, such as when working alongside pupils from other local schools.

Many pupils take on additional leadership responsibilities and carry these out maturely. They are keen to contribute to improving their school and community through these roles. For example, following a suggestion from pupils the school council requested goal posts for football at break times. They presented a convincing case that gained the support of school leaders.

Most pupils understand the need to eat and drink healthily and to take regular exercise. For example, pupils in key stage 2 develop a good awareness of the effects of too much sugar in the diet through their investigations as part of their healthy living topic. Many pupils improve their fitness through participating in a range of extra-curricular sporting activities enthusiastically. Many pupils take part in local sporting events and share their success through assemblies and school displays. Most pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

Nearly all pupils are developing well as ethical, informed citizens. They are active in their support for recycling by providing different bins and encouraging pupils to use these. Many show commitment and enthusiasm in caring for the local environment. For example, key stage 2 pupils worked with visitors during the school's 'Parliament Week' to identify ways of reducing plastic waste in school. Pupils support the work of local charities effectively, for instance through regular fundraising activities for a nearby hospice and the local foodbank. Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of the rights of the child. Pupils have developed their own code of 'rights and responsibilities' that provides a clear expectation for all members of the school community. As a result, nearly all pupils show fairness to others.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly and punctually. Overall rates of attendance compare well to those of similar schools over the last three years.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The positive working relationships between adults and pupils are a strength of the school. All staff create a calm and encouraging atmosphere that supports pupils to work with focus and enjoy their learning. Teachers plan lessons carefully and organise resources effectively. They use clear learning objectives and set appropriate success criteria for pupils to work towards. They link most aspects of learning to current topics skilfully, providing a rich context for activities that engage the interest of pupils well and build on their previous learning successfully.

Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to work alongside partners, in groups and individually. In the foundation phase, the mix of independent and adult-led activities provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to use and apply the skills they are developing across the areas of learning. As a result, most pupils tackle independent challenges confidently. Teachers plan suitable opportunities for pupils to complete worthwhile activities using the outdoor environment, for example, to hunt for mini-beasts and to use natural materials in their art work. However, staff across the school do not make as much use of the extensive school grounds to engage pupils' interest as they could.

All staff know individual pupils well. Teachers plan stimulating tasks that match the needs of most pupils successfully. They use questioning effectively to extend pupils' thinking and to encourage them to develop and express their ideas clearly. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers plan tasks that do not challenge pupils to think enough for themselves. This limits the opportunity for pupils to test out their own ideas or make choices about how to tackle a problem.

Teachers use 'working walls' effectively to make the development of pupils' skills clearly visible. These displays present a useful real-time record of pupils' progress towards specific goals. For example, a working wall in the key stage 2 classroom shows the steps pupils take in researching, planning and writing a guidebook. This focus on the pupils' 'learning journey' helps pupils to view their learning as a process they can apply to a wide range of different purposes.

Teachers and teaching assistants monitor pupils' progress closely. They intervene when needed to provide further direction or to address pupils' misconceptions.

Teaching assistants provide valuable support to pupils with additional learning needs. This enables them to develop good basic skills that underpin their progress well. Teachers provide useful verbal and written feedback to pupils. They identify strengths and aspects for improvement in pupils' work fairly. They use their understanding of pupils' progress to plan appropriately for the next steps in their learning. Teachers provide worthwhile opportunities for pupils to evaluate the quality of their work and to assess the work of their peers. Pupils value the opportunity to share and comment on the work of others as it helps them to reflect on their own strengths and to exchange ideas for improving their work.

Overall, teachers support pupils to develop their Welsh language skills appropriately. However, they do not provide enough opportunity for pupils to develop their ability to use spoken Welsh in everyday situations confidently. There are worthwhile opportunities for pupils to learn about the culture and heritage of Wales, including studying important historical figures such as Mary Jones and drawing characters from Welsh legends in art. A residential visit to the Urdd Centre in Cardiff promotes pupils' understanding of the culture and modern economy of Wales and develops their self-esteem and independence well.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has effective systems for tracking pupils' progress on their journey through the school. Teachers use this information appropriately in order to identify pupils who need additional support in literacy or numeracy and to provide intervention when necessary. All pupils with additional learning needs have an appropriate learning plan that sets suitable targets and manageable steps towards achieving these. Staff provide beneficial interventions to support pupils to make progress towards their targets. Teachers work with pupils and parents to monitor these plans regularly.

The school engages well with parents by providing frequent newsletters, posting on social media and sharing useful reports on pupils' progress. There are a wide range of opportunities for parents to become involved in the life of the school, such as coaching sports teams, gardening and sharing lunch with their children. Parents' views contributed to renewing the vision for the school. The school also plays a part in the wider community, for example by organising pupil visits to the local shop, working closely with the WI and creating a piece of artwork for the local community through its 'Blank Canvas' project.

There are good opportunities for pupils to learn how to maintain a healthy lifestyle, such as hand washing workshops that promote pupils' understanding of hygiene. Police liaison officers visit the school regularly to teach pupils about a range of topics related to keeping safe, such as internet safety and substance misuse. The school provides many worthwhile opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities, such as dance, art and swimming. These clubs are popular with pupils and promote their fitness and creativity well.

The school provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their personal and social skills and to promote their spiritual, moral and cultural development. For example, as part of their Africa topic, pupils in key stage 2 explored cultural traditions through activities such as music, cookery and storytelling.

There are also valuable opportunities to enable all pupils to develop as well-informed citizens who have a sound understanding of different faiths. For example, pupils in key stage 2 learn about the importance of central beliefs in Islam while pupils in the foundation phase develop their moral understanding by reflecting on stories drawn from Christianity.

Teachers provide nearly all pupils with opportunities to take on a wide variety of responsibilities, for example as members of the criw Cymraeg or as eco monitors. As a result, many pupils have a good understanding of how their collective actions contribute to the wider benefit of the community. However, opportunities for pupils to make independent decisions about improvements they wish to see in the school, such as increasing the use of outdoor learning, are less well developed.

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

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher has a clear vision to build a happy and united community that inspires pupils to achieve well. She has communicated this ambition successfully and gained the support of pupils, staff, parents and governors by providing a strong strategic direction for the development of the school. As a result, there is an evident sense of shared purpose among members of the school community who work well together to provide a stimulating environment for learning and to raise standards of pupils' achievement and wellbeing.

The school's self-evaluation processes use a good range of first-hand evidence to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Regular monitoring activities including lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning enable the headteacher and governors to develop an accurate picture of the school's performance. Leaders also consider the views of parents and the direct experience of pupils carefully. They use this information to identify key priorities for improvement accurately.

Leaders plan for improvement well. They determine necessary actions and set clear success criteria to measure progress. Staff work closely together to implement actions and to monitor their impact robustly. The headteacher collaborates effectively with the school's improvement adviser to provide a critical challenge to new initiatives. Because of this systematic approach, the school has secured valuable improvements in the quality of its provision over the last 18 months. For example, the quality of teaching in the foundation phase and the provision for pupils to develop their ICT skills have both improved.

Leaders place a high priority on the professional development of staff. They use performance management procedures to set clear expectations and target resources appropriately to support staff to achieve their objectives. The school makes very effective use of strategic partnerships with other local schools to support the professional learning of staff and to build capacity for improvement. These valuable links with English and Welsh-medium schools have enabled teachers and teaching assistants to share effective practice across a wider pool of professional expertise. These partnerships have improved the knowledge, skills and confidence of staff and

enriched the learning experiences enjoyed by pupils. For instance, joint planning between foundation phase teachers in nearby schools has improved opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills purposefully across the areas of learning.

Governors show strong support for the school. They have a keen understanding of the school's importance within the local community and work hard to maintain its standing. Governors know the school's priorities well. They make regular focused visits to school and many contribute their own expertise to support the school's strategic development purposefully. For example, they have secured significant funding to develop the school's outdoor environment and to minimise its future running costs by reducing its carbon footprint. The governing body has established efficient procedures to discharge its statutory duties effectively and to provide an appropriate level of challenge and support to the headteacher.

The headteacher and governors manage the school's finances carefully. They plan spending prudently to support improvement on key priorities. They have managed the restructuring of classes very effectively to retain a small surplus budget without compromising the good level of staffing and resources available to maintain standards.

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.

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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