



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

**A report on**

**Ysgol Babanod Mochdre**

**Station Road  
Mochdre  
Conwy  
LL28 5EF**

**Date of inspection: October 2023**

**by**

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

## About Ysgol Babanod Mochdre

|  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| Name of provider   | Ysgol Babanod Mochdre        |
| Local authority  | Conwy County Borough Council |
| Language of the provider   | English                      |
| Type of school   | Primary                      |
| Religious character  | n/a                          |
| Number of pupils on roll   | 59                           |
| Pupils of statutory school age   | 31                           |
| Number in nursery classes  | 11                           |
| 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 23.0%) | 43.2%                        |
| 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 16.1%)               | 13.6%                        |
| Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home   | 1.7%                         |
| Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language  | *                            |
| Date of headteacher appointment  | 01/09/2017                   |
| Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)  | 01/05/2017                   |
| Start date of inspection   | 16/10/2023                   |
| Ysgol Babanod Mochdre is one of two schools in the Mochre Federation of schools.   |                              |

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](http://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 Babanod Mochdre is part of the Mochdre federation of schools, which includes Ysgol Cystennin. Ysgol Babanod Mochdre provides a nurturing environment where pupils feel safe and secure. Ensuring the well-being of pupils is a high priority for all members of the school community. As a result, pupils feel cared for and valued by staff.

The headteacher has maintained a positive team ethos during a period of significant challenge. She has established an inclusive and caring culture. However, long term staff absences within the federation have had a significant impact on the effectiveness of leadership and provision at the school. School improvement work does not focus well enough on outcomes for pupils. Currently, leaders do not show the capacity to secure the improvements needed at the school.

Provision to develop pupils' digital and Welsh language skills is effective overall and supports most pupils to make appropriate progress. However, the school's provision for developing pupils' skills as they move through the school is too varied in important areas. As a result, a minority of older pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), do not make effective progress.

The school is at a very early stage in reforming their curriculum in response to Curriculum for Wales. Teaching and learning experiences provided for pupils do not support them to make enough progress across the full breadth of the curriculum. The range of experiences to enhance the curriculum, such as visits and extra-curricular activities, is at an early stage of development.

Leaders have introduced a beneficial approach to supporting positive behaviour and as a result most pupils behave well. Teaching engages pupils well and learning environments have recently improved. However, in about half of classes, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.

The school has established an appropriate culture of safeguarding. However, rates of attendance are well below the national average and particularly low for pupils eligible for free school meals.

## Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen the impact of leadership at all levels in order to secure the necessary improvements
- R2 Ensure that all groups of pupils, including those with ALN and those eligible for free school meals, make effective progress in developing literacy and numeracy skills
- R3 Ensure that teaching is effective and demonstrates appropriately high expectations of what all pupils can achieve

- R4 Develop a rich curriculum that builds on pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding progressively
- R5 Improve attendance, particularly for those pupils eligible for free school meals

## What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress usually every four to six months.

## Main evaluation

### Learning

Many pupils enter the nursery with skills, knowledge and understanding below those expected for their age. Younger pupils make effective progress overall. However, across the school progress is too varied. A minority of older pupils, including those eligible for free school meals and pupils with ALN, do not progress well enough in important areas.

As they move through the school, most pupils make strong progress in their speaking and listening skills. The younger pupils make rapid progress in this area of their development during the first years of school. By Year 2, pupils communicate well with adults and express enthusiasm when discussing their learning. For example, they discuss the properties of liquids confidently and describe how they fill the shape of their container.

Overall, a minority of pupils do not make suitable progress in developing their literacy skills. Most younger pupils listen well to familiar stories and join in with repeated phrases. In the reception class, they learn letter sounds rapidly and soon begin to blend them together to read simple words. As they move through the school, a majority of pupils apply their knowledge to read and write simple words effectively. They regularly engage with books and speak with enthusiasm about their favourite characters and stories. However, a minority of older pupils struggle to learn letter sounds, read unfamiliar words or read with fluency at an appropriate level.

Over time, a majority of pupils are developing their writing skills well. Very young children enjoy experimenting with mark making and begin to understand that letters represent sounds effectively. Most reception pupils are beginning to write individual letters using the correct formation. For example, they use their fingers to write letters in rice or sand successfully. By Year 1, pupils begin to write in simple phrases such as when they write to a pen pal. In Year 2, a majority of pupils write appropriately for a range of purposes, such as retelling familiar stories. They use suitable vocabulary and are beginning to use simple connectives to extend their sentences. However, a minority do not develop their writing skills well enough.

Most younger pupils develop their early numeracy skills well. They count to at least ten accurately and recognise numbers during play successfully. For example, they count the number of blocks used to build a tower. As they progress through the school, they recognise and name common shapes and use their understanding of money to perform simple calculations in the role-play area. By Year 2, many pupils add and subtract two-digit numbers, and gain confidence in telling the time. However, most pupils do not develop a broad enough range of mathematical skills and do not apply their numeracy skills at a sufficiently high level in other areas of the curriculum.

Many pupils across the school develop their Welsh language skills effectively. They sing well known songs and respond confidently to simple questions from staff. For instance, younger pupils use Welsh language to describe the colours they see in a set of tea towels.

Pupils develop their digital skills appropriately throughout the school. For instance, they use an app successfully to create simple animations, combining photographs, text and sound. Pupils across the school develop their creative and physical skills well. Nursery and reception pupils use a range of tools effectively in their play, for example to chop real vegetables successfully in the role-play area or use a hammer with accuracy in the outdoor area.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Most pupils feel safe and valued in school. They benefit from positive relationships with supportive staff and know who they can talk to if they are worried or upset. Most pupils demonstrate high levels of respect for each other and adults. As a result, behaviour in the classroom and around the school is good. Most pupils are aware of the importance of staying safe. For example, they use a knife sensibly when chopping vegetables.

Most pupils are beginning to understand how to keep healthy through eating healthy food and being active. For example, they know that fruit is good for you. However, pupils do not always make healthy choices in the snacks and drinks that they bring to school. Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to physical activity, and many choose to engage in activities such as running and climbing during break times. Most pupils enjoy opportunities to take part in a range of physical activities throughout the day such as mark making or digging in the sand.

Most pupils settle quickly into routines and develop their independence from a young age. For example, the youngest pupils learn to put on waterproof clothing with very little support from staff. Pupils take turns and support each other effectively as they play together. For example, they invite a friend to join their game. Older pupils collaborate well as they build a 'Christmas village' using a range of resources.

Many pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. Younger pupils approach their learning experiences enthusiastically. They demonstrate resilience when faced with unfamiliar tasks, such as when solving challenging puzzles. Most pupils develop curiosity and an understanding of the natural world through regular time outdoors. For example, older pupils explore the outdoor learning environment with interest as they collect natural materials to create a magic potion.

Many pupils participate in a range of pupil voice groups confidently. A pupil group, focused on supporting positive behaviour and reducing bullying, is having a positive impact. Pupils respond well to opportunities to make simple decisions about their learning such as which book the teacher will read at story time. During lessons and activities, pupils are beginning to respond well to the few opportunities to improve their work. For example, they make simple improvements to their writing.

Many pupils have a good understanding of the school's values. Older pupils talk confidently about the school's '5 golden rules,' which promote key positive behaviours. They reflect, for example, on how to be gentle and kind. These values contribute effectively to the school's nurturing and caring environment. Pupils respond thoughtfully during acts of worship. For instance, after considering the importance of being thankful, they create thank you cards for people who help them within the community such as the school cook and staff in a local post office.

Pupil attendance at school is improving slowly. However, rates of absence remain too high, particularly among pupils eligible for free school meals.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

The school has begun to explore a range of approaches to the planning and delivery of Curriculum for Wales. However, effective planning for the curriculum is at a very early stage and the school has not yet developed a clear overview of breadth and progression that meets the needs of pupils effectively. For example, plans that outline how each Area of Learning will be taught over time are not yet in place.

The school's provision for developing pupils' digital and Welsh language skills is effective overall. However, provision to develop pupils' reading, writing and numeracy skills has not been developed well enough. As a result, provision is too varied and does not build systematically on what pupils already know and can already do.

Staff provide regular opportunities for pupils to read and write. In the best examples, teachers develop pupils' understanding of letter sounds and early reading strategies well. However, leaders have not established a clear strategy for the development of pupils' phonic skills. This results in pupil progress being too varied. For example, a minority of pupils in Year 2 have weak phonic knowledge. The school has not considered the progression of pupils' writing as they move through the school well enough. As a result, the expectations of pupils' writing skills in different classes are not clear. For example, a minority of the youngest pupils are required to copy letters before they have sufficient pencil control.

Leaders have recently introduced a new scheme of work for teaching maths. However, this has had limited success in improving teaching in this area and leaders are currently exploring other options. This has left the school without a clear strategy for teaching numeracy across each class. As a result, lessons planned for older pupils do not provide them with sufficient challenge.

Most staff plan topics that engage the interests of pupils successfully. For example, within the topic 'Me, Mochdre and the World', pupils in Year 2 show enthusiasm for making potions and exploring capacity. The school demonstrates a commitment to celebrating Welsh heritage and culture effectively and staff are beginning to provide

stimulating activities that promote pupils' interest in the immediate locality of Mochdre. For example, pupils enjoy a visit to a local church where they learn about its features.

Regular observations of pupils involved in their activities enable teachers to quickly discover what motivates and interests pupils. Staff are beginning to use this information to plan future provision suitably. For example, when a pupil showed an interest in using cups to measure liquid, the teacher planned for a more formal activity on capacity.

Overall, the school uses the outdoor environment well to enhance learning experiences. For instance, pupils develop their physical, creative and personal and social skills well as they paint pumpkins or build models together. Provision for pupils' personal and social education is effective and they are learning to understand their own feelings and those of others successfully.

Nearly all staff develop warm and engaging working relationships with pupils. This creates a welcoming and caring ethos throughout the school, which contributes well to pupils' positive behaviour and involvement in their learning.

Many teachers share learning intentions with pupils suitably and have appropriate subject knowledge. Where teaching is at its strongest, careful questioning encourages pupils to develop their thinking successfully. Many teachers plan tasks that help pupils make connections with previous learning. However, too often the teaching of older pupils does not provide enough challenge to enable them to make effective progress. Most teachers use resources appropriately to enhance pupils' learning. For example, they provide a beneficial range of resources to enhance pupils' creativity when building models in the block play area.

Teachers are beginning to assess pupil progress effectively and use this information to target specific individuals and groups, for example those pupils who are at risk of underachievement. However, these procedures are too varied across the school and as a result the impact on pupil progress is limited.

Teachers are beginning to provide pupils with effective verbal feedback about their learning and, in the best examples, this supports pupils to make effective progress. For example, younger children are supported to correct their mistakes successfully during a reading game. However, overall, this approach is not consistent, and pupils' misconceptions are not always addressed well enough.

### **Care, support and guidance**

The school is a welcoming, caring community that supports the emotional and social needs of pupils effectively. Staff place pupil well-being high on their agenda and work successfully to support pupils through beneficial whole-school strategies. A strength of the school is its inclusive ethos. For example, pupils who arrive at school late are offered breakfast and time in The Snug, if needed, before joining their peers for lessons.

The school has introduced a new approach to supporting positive behaviour and, as a result, most pupils behave well. Staff monitor the progress of all pupils and provide

extra support suitably when needed. Leaders organise pupil progress meetings to gather information and assess pupil needs. However, these meetings do not identify actions or next steps for pupils sharply enough. A range of focused interventions are in place for pupils identified as needing extra help. However, this work is at an early stage and its impact is too variable. For example, a minority of older pupils are not making sufficient progress in learning initial letter sounds.

The school's provision to identify and support pupils with ALN is at an early stage of development. The recently appointed additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCO) and headteacher have introduced a suitable structure to identify and track the progress of pupils with ALN. Communication with parents of pupils with ALN is effective. The ALNCO provides staff with useful strategies to support pupils with a wide range of learning needs. Overall, staff use this information appropriately when working with individual pupils. However, this work is not yet embedded and a minority of pupils with ALN do not make sufficient progress towards their individual targets.

Staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of how to look after themselves, and to recognise that all children are special. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development appropriately. School assemblies support pupils to develop a sense of belonging and positive moral values. Staff provide useful opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of different religious customs. Opportunities to learn from visitors or visiting places in the local community have recently improved. However, after-school activities are limited.

Staff support pupils to use their imagination and engage with creative arts well. For example, they provide ample opportunities for pupils to express themselves through drama, small world, and role-play. Staff provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to perform and work collaboratively, such as when they act out the story of Dinas Emrys. This develops pupils' self-confidence and ability to listen to others successfully.

The school has a suitable culture of safeguarding. Leaders ensure that there are effective policies and procedures in place, which all staff follow to ensure the safety of learners and staff. The school curriculum supports pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe effectively. This has a positive impact, such as when pupils remind a friend to wear a helmet when they ride a trike.

The school has developed a range of procedures and approaches for monitoring attendance and for encouraging pupils to attend school. As a result, rates of attendance are slowly beginning to rise. However, overall, these procedures are not having sufficient impact on improving attendance, which remains too low. Pupils eligible for free school meals continue to have a significantly higher rate of absence compared to other pupils.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher ensures that the well-being of pupils and staff is a central focus of the federation's work. This has resulted in staff maintaining a positive team ethos during a period of significant challenge. The headteacher models and promotes professional values and behaviours that contribute positively to creating an

environment where staff feel supported and valued. She promotes a caring, inclusive climate where most pupils feel happy and safe in school.

Long term staff absences within the federation have had a significant impact on the effectiveness of leadership and provision across the school. Currently, leaders do not show the capacity to secure the necessary improvements. Leaders are at an early stage of developing a culture of mutual support and collaboration across the schools in the federation.

The headteacher has a clear vision for the federation of Mochdre schools. This is based on pupils developing a passion for learning and the skills needed for life-long learning. However, aspects of the vision are at an early stage of being implemented and reflected throughout the school. For instance, provision for the progression of pupils' skills is limited.

Leaders have identified many areas for improvement accurately such as numeracy skills, writing and assessment. However, over time, leadership at all levels has not identified additional important areas that require significant improvement such as the quality of teaching. The school's track record of making improvements is not strong enough. For example, most areas identified for development during the school's previous Estyn inspection remain weak.

Leaders undertake a few monitoring activities such as learning walks and looking at pupils' work. However, this does not focus well enough on the quality of teaching or pupils' progress. As a result, areas identified for development are too general to support improvement effectively. Improvement work does not focus well enough on pupils' skill progression in important areas such as numeracy and literacy.

Across the federation, roles and responsibilities are at an early stage of development. For example, leaders have allocated specific curriculum responsibilities to teaching staff. However, time is not allocated effectively to enable these roles to be developed or to have any meaningful impact on improving the curriculum.

The governing body is supportive of the federation and its place in the wider community. Governors demonstrate a keen interest in the life of the school and are enthusiastic about what the school is trying to achieve. However, they do not have a sound understanding of the progress pupils make or the quality of the learning experiences across the federation. This limits their capacity to act as a critical friend to the school. Governors promote healthy eating and drinking suitably. They know that water is provided in school and that staff encourage pupils to eat healthy snacks. However, a few pupils do not make healthy choices in the snacks and drinks that they bring to school.

The federation has placed a strong emphasis on developing the Welsh language and this has resulted in pupils developing their skills well in this area. However, the federation does not address other national priorities well enough. For example, developments in response to Curriculum for Wales are too slow and the school is at an early stage of implementing ALN reform.

A recent success of the federation's professional learning programme for staff has been the training to develop the quality of learning environments. This training has

had a positive impact on the quality of the learning environments across the federation. However, in general, professional learning opportunities for staff are not planned strategically enough and are too reactive. They do not focus well enough on improving the quality of teaching.

Leaders do not ensure that the performance of all staff is reviewed effectively. For example, teaching staff do not receive performance review in a timely manner. Where performance review is in place, targets are often too general to support improvement and do not focus well enough on outcomes for pupils. For example, success criteria focus on actions rather than outcomes. Therefore, targets can be achieved without considering the impact on pupils.

Overall, school leaders develop productive relationships with parents, particularly those who have children with ALN. However, a minority of parents feel that communication could be improved, including communication about their child's progress. Leaders place a strong focus on improving attendance and attendance rates are slowly beginning to improve. However, strategies in place are not having a great enough impact, and rates of attendance remain too low.

## 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

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://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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