



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

**A report on**

**Ysgol Bryn Gwalia C.P.**

**Clayton Road  
Mold  
Flintshire  
CH7 1SU**

**Date of inspection: December 2023**

**by**

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

## About Ysgol Bryn Gwalia C.P.

Name of provider	Ysgol Bryn Gwalia C.P.
Local authority	Flintshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	139
Pupils of statutory school age	120
Number in nursery classes	18
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 23.7%)	52.5%
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 13.2%)	13.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	8.6%
Date of headteacher appointment	04/01/2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	02/11/2015
Start date of inspection	11/12/2023
<p>The school has set up its own nurture class using PDG funding. This is for pupils who are vulnerable, with high levels of emotional need. This was inspected.</p> <p>The school shares its site with a local authority PRU – this is separate to the main school building and is not managed by the school. This was not inspected.</p>	

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](https://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 Bryn Gwalia is a nurturing, inclusive school, which provides exceptional care and support for its pupils. Relationships across the school are strong and parents, pupils and staff feel valued. Provision for pupils' well-being is a strength of the school. The school offers a range of beneficial initiatives to help pupils to improve their self-esteem and recognise their emotions. For example, the school's nurture class, Dosbarth Derwen, supports small groups of pupils to regulate their behaviour and to make effective progress in their learning.

Leaders and staff know their pupils well. Approaches to teaching match pupils' developmental needs well throughout their time at school. Staff use questioning, assessment and feedback effectively to check pupils' understanding and to move learning on. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is strong. This includes carefully tailored support from the school's teaching assistant. Despite their low starting points, most pupils engage well with their learning and make strong progress in their literacy, numeracy and digital skills during their time at the school.

The school curriculum is broad and balanced and teachers provide a progressive range of activities to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills. However, across the school, opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in relevant, real-life situations are inconsistent. Teachers support pupils to develop their sense of 'cynefin' (belonging) and their understanding of life as modern-day citizens in Wales effectively. This work supports pupils to gain a good understanding of their own identity and to develop empathy with other people.

The headteacher is a compassionate, caring leader who works successfully alongside the governing body and staff to drive school improvement. Self-evaluation procedures are robust and this supports leaders to identify school strengths and areas for further improvement effectively. Leaders adopt a worthwhile, collaborative approach embracing the input of parents and the community. This provides beneficial additional support to the school and helps pupils to make strong progress with their learning.

## Recommendations

- R1 Refine provision to ensure that there are consistent opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and digital skills in relevant, real-life situations

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

### Learning

When they first join school most pupils have skills, knowledge and understanding below those expected for their age. Most pupils, including those from low-income households and those with additional learning needs (ALN), make strong progress overall.

During their time at the school, most pupils develop as confident speakers and attentive listeners. The youngest pupils listen and respond well to adults and play alongside each other amicably. Reception pupils develop increasing confidence in their speaking skills, using a wider range of words. Older pupils work effectively in groups to discuss and share their thoughts about their learning. They listen carefully to each other and begin to build upon each other's ideas effectively, for example when discussing the work of the founder of the Welsh speaking community in Patagonia. By the time pupils reach Year 6 most pupils are articulate, confident speakers who use increasingly adventurous vocabulary.

Most pupils' reading skills develop well from their individual starting points. Younger pupils develop their knowledge of sounds and letters effectively. As they progress, they use this knowledge successfully to build words when reading. Year 3 and 4 pupils retell events, discuss characters from their books and have a clear understanding of plot. Many older pupils read with pace and use the skills and knowledge they develop in their work across the curriculum well. By the time they are in Year 6, many pupils are fluent, enthusiastic readers.

Across the school, most pupils develop their writing skills appropriately. The youngest pupils make marks using a variety of writing tools effectively. As they move through the school, younger pupils begin to write familiar words independently and use these successfully to write simple sentences. For example, Years 1 and 2 pupils write in complete sentences when they write letters to a troll. Most pupils present their work with care and develop their spelling, punctuation and handwriting successfully. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils organise their writing into lively, interesting paragraphs, selecting words for effect. They make adventurous choices with their vocabulary, such as when adding more complex words to add impact to their poetry.

Most pupils develop secure mathematical knowledge and understanding of a range of topics including shape, data handling and number as they progress through the school. They begin to apply their skills appropriately when solving problems. The youngest pupils develop an understanding of numbers to ten such as when counting dinosaur toys. By the time they reach Year 2, they begin to recite their five times table confidently. Older pupils develop as confident mathematicians, who use their skills effectively to calculate more complex problems.

Most pupils are enthusiastic about the Welsh language and develop their spoken Welsh appropriately. They use basic vocabulary and respond to simple questions to communicate effectively. Younger pupils instigate and hold simple conversations with

visitors. Older pupils show confidence when using familiar Welsh language patterns and begin to develop this well through regular conversations.

Generally, pupils use digital skills efficiently to support their learning. Younger pupils program a digital toy effectively to move along a set path. As they progress through the school, most pupils improve and apply their digital skills well, such as when creating bar charts and when coding. Older pupils create databases about conflicts around the world and create web pages providing information on the importance of black history.

Overall, most pupils develop their thinking skills effectively. They work well individually and in small groups such as when Years 1 and 2 pupils think about the best materials to build a den outdoors. As they move through the school, pupils recognise that there are different ways to solve a problem and they think carefully about alternative ways to find a solution when they get stuck.

Most pupils develop their physical skills well. For example, the youngest pupils run, jump and stop at signals when playing outdoor games. the outdoor area. Older pupils climb with care and plan a suitable route to travel across large outdoor apparatus. They demonstrate increased levels of poise and agility in their movements.

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

Nearly all pupils feel safe and valued as a result of the school's caring and nurturing ethos. They know who to speak to if they have any concerns and that staff will listen to them and take appropriate action. Most pupils know how to stay safe online, for example by keeping passwords safe.

Across the school, nearly all pupils build positive working relationships with staff. This contributes to pupils' strong sense of well-being. They display excellent behaviour in class and around the school and acquire a range of effective strategies to remain calm and consider their emotions. For example, pupils make appropriate use of class calming spaces when they need time to reflect about how they feel. Pupils working in Dosbarth Derwen, learn to identify and discuss their feelings effectively. Through this, they develop an increasing awareness of how their emotions can impact on their work and behaviour. They engage successfully in their learning and make effective progress.

Nearly all pupils feel respected and listened to by the school. They feel that their ideas and suggestions are valued, and this motivates pupils to take action to make a difference to school life. They take on leadership roles and participate actively in a variety of pupil voice groups. For example, the food and health group of pupils recently worked with the school meal provider to improve school meals through the offer of a healthy salad and yogurt bar. There are now more healthy choices available to pupils during lunch times. Most pupils have a strong understanding of what they need to do to be healthy and enjoy participating in healthy activities such as 'the daily mile' to keep fit.

Most pupils, including those with ALN, feel included and enjoy participating in a wide range of activities during and after school. They use their creative skills well and work enthusiastically with outside providers to develop their understanding of what it

means to run an enterprise. For example, the Enterprise Club use market research to create and sell gifts to the community.

Across the school, most pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility and pride in their school and community. For example, older pupils manage the school reward shop to promote positive behaviour. This encourages pupils to behave well and to improve their attendance. In addition, pupils value their worthwhile relationship with the local hospital, where they develop a sense of empathy and compassion for members of the community.

Most pupils embody the school's values successfully during play and lesson times. They are polite and respectful to each other and visitors to the school. As they move through the school, they begin to show an increasing understanding of their own identity. They enjoy learning about one another's cultures, languages and beliefs. By the time they reach Year 6, most pupils develop a good knowledge and understanding of their rights as children. The work of the school pupil rights ambassadors promotes this effectively.

Most pupils listen attentively to their teachers' instructions and concentrate well on their work during lessons. They persevere well with tasks and activities, often seeking alternative solutions when a first attempt fails. They listen carefully to what their friends and teachers say and respond to their ideas considerately. Most pupils value the feedback they receive from teachers about the quality of their work. Generally, they use this appropriately as a means of improving their learning. Older pupils make increasing use of self and peer assessment and are keen to make positive changes to their work. They draw upon previous learning and use this effectively when faced with new ideas. This improves their self-confidence and supports their progress well as they move through the school.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

Staff develop beneficial working relationships with pupils and promote positive behaviour across the school. Overall, teachers ensure that classes are calm, purposeful learning environments where pupils interact positively with each other and adults. Skilled teaching assistants provide highly effective support to help pupils to engage with their learning. For example, pupils in Dosbarth Derwen benefit from the opportunity to receive small group activities. This enables them to make strong progress in their curriculum work.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum. Through this, teachers plan an interesting range of learning experiences. These support pupils to develop their knowledge and skills well. Teachers ensure that pupils contribute their ideas suitably to planning and this motivates pupils to engage well in their learning. The school enriches its curriculum successfully through visits and activities within the school grounds, local area and further afield. Each year group benefits from opportunities to learn about their locality. For example, the youngest pupils learn about the history of the school's ancient oak tree. This provides them with rich opportunities to learn about the history of Mold. Through these links they develop an understanding of positive role models from Wales and the wider world. For example, Year 3 pupils learn about Daniel Owen, a local famous author who, despite a humble background, became successful during Victorian times.

The school develops pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills progressively and successfully as they move through the school. In the youngest classes teachers organise the learning environment effectively to encourage pupils to talk and foster a love of learning. Teachers provide appropriate activities that focus on the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. They ensure that pupils rapidly develop their ability to read, write and calculate numerical problems. For example, younger pupils develop an appropriate understanding of the sounds that letters make through daily opportunities to practise their reading. Most teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical skills. They, often use carefully selected resources that help pupils to develop a secure understanding of basic concepts such as number that, over time, they learn to apply when solving more complex problems. The school ensures that pupils have access to a variety of digital resources and teachers plan a sequential range of activities to develop pupils' digital skills successfully.

Most teachers ensure that pupils have appropriate opportunities to apply their skills across the curriculum. For example, during their topic work on dinosaurs, younger pupils develop their speaking and listening skills suitably when role playing the part of dinosaur experts. However, whilst the school provides opportunities for pupils to apply their skills across the curriculum effectively, pupils do not have consistent opportunities to develop their skills in relevant, real-life contexts.

Across the school, most staff model the Welsh language effectively. In the youngest classes they encourage pupils to recite Welsh nursery rhymes and sing songs. Teachers build on these early experiences well, through language practice in lessons and throughout the day. In classes for older pupils, teachers provide a range of resources to support pupils to develop their spoken Welsh effectively.

Most teachers have a secure knowledge of the concepts and skills they teach. They provide clear explanations and talk to pupils about what they need to do to be successful in their learning. They use questioning effectively to develop pupils' thinking and to check their understanding. Teachers encourage pupils to reflect regularly on their learning. As a result, most pupils have a clear understanding of what to do and how to do it.

Each term, teachers work with leaders to review each pupil's learning. Through these meetings they identify the progress pupils make and what they need to do to improve their work further. As a result, teachers modify their planning appropriately to meet the needs of all pupils. In addition, support staff provide a range of effective interventions to help pupils in need of additional support. Throughout the year, teachers provide informative reports to parents, which outline pupils' progress and identify how parents can support their child at home.

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

Ysgol Bryn Gwalia provides a caring, inclusive learning environment, which caters effectively for the needs of its pupils. Provision for pupils with ALN is strong. Teachers build positive relationships with pupils and their families, enabling staff to identify pupils' strengths and potential barriers to learning. This supports staff well to provide a bespoke range of interventions to meet pupils' needs. Leaders monitor the impact of interventions vigilantly and adjust provision when appropriate. As a result,



most pupils identified with ALN, make strong progress from their individual starting points.

The school's provision for pupil well-being is highly effective. Staff know their pupils well and work closely with leaders to monitor pupil behaviour, attendance and self-esteem. They ensure that pupils receive the most appropriate form of support in a timely manner. The school's nurture resource class, Dosbath Derwen, ensures that pupils, with a high level of need, receive exceptional care and support. This helps pupils to regulate their emotions, manage their behaviour effectively and to engage well with their learning. Across the school, trained support staff provide beneficial emotional support to pupils. This helps pupils to discuss their feelings and consider ways to improve how they feel. As a result, most pupils develop strategies to manage their behaviour and emotions successfully. This is a strength of the school.

A regular programme of assemblies, alongside curriculum work promotes the development of pupils' moral, spiritual and social skills well. For example, older pupils develop an understanding of conflict and peace through their work about the peace activist Malala. A systematic programme of lessons ensures that pupils develop a strong understanding of their own identity and an appreciation of other cultures. Staff encourage pupils to share their home language and beliefs whilst also learning what it is like to be a citizen in modern day Wales. The school's work with the local community helps pupils to develop an appropriate sense of cynefin. For example, pupils gain a strong sense of belonging through their work on 'The Seven Wonders of Mold.'

The school Senedd and a variety of pupil voice groups provide pupils with good opportunities to develop their skills as leaders whilst supporting school improvement initiatives. For example, older pupils, elected as Prime Ministers of the Senedd, support school leaders effectively to develop child-friendly policies. Pupils also benefit from an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities such as The Enterprise Club and Urdd Club. These help pupils to gain confidence and learn new skills whilst having fun.

The school provides a range of workshops and activities to support individual parents and families. A dedicated family liaison officer works closely with parents providing bespoke support when needed or by signposting them to external agencies. She works with staff to facilitate several family learning initiatives. For example, families benefit from workshops on internet safety for their children as well as learning how they can support their child with their learning. This supports parents to build the confidence they need to help their child at home.

Staff work well with a range of outside agencies to develop pupils' wider skills and their knowledge of the world of work. For example, through the school's collaboration with North Wales Police, the school has established its own mini police initiative where pupils develop a strong sense of care and pride in their community. Recently, the school's work with a national financial education charity has begun to develop pupil's awareness of the use and value of money. For example, older pupils run a school reward shop which helps pupils, across the school, to learn about the benefits of saving towards a goal.

Leaders promote a positive culture of safeguarding with robust systems and measures in place to ensure the safety and security of all. They promote daily attendance at school effectively and work with a range of agencies to provide beneficial support to families. This has helped to improve the attendance of pupils, particularly those who are eligible for free school meals.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher provides highly effective, compassionate leadership, which promotes the well-being of all successfully. As a result, most pupils have high levels of self-esteem and staff feel appreciated. Across the school, relationships are strong and parents value the effective communication they receive from school. Leaders deploy resources effectively to support pupil, parent and staff well-being. This creates a caring, kind ethos which permeates the school.

All leaders staff and stakeholders have a shared vision to support the development of pupils as lifelong learners, who have high aspirations for the future. Leaders model and promote the school values successfully and they contribute positively to school improvement. For example, they work alongside the headteacher to track and monitor the progress of all pupils including specific groups. As a result, leaders have a clear understanding of pupil progress.

Senior leaders adopt a strong, collaborative approach to strategic improvement. Leaders use a robust system of self-evaluation, which draws upon a wide range of evidence successfully to identify strengths and areas for improvement in teaching and learning. For example, the school's recent work on improving consistency in the teaching of numeracy, has led to improvements in pupils' ability to apply their mathematical skills to solve problems. Governors and teachers contribute effectively to school improvement through joint learning walks, work scrutiny and listening to the views of pupils. This ensures there is a consistent approach to improvement and that there is clarity about school priorities. As a result, staff feel that they have ownership of the school's improvement journey.

The headteacher holds teachers to account sensitively and uses performance management processes successfully to drive school improvement. Coaching plays an effective part in the process and trained staff work in triads to support one another's practice. As a result, staff have begun to share good practice with each other. Leaders ensure that this links carefully to a beneficial programme of professional learning for staff. For example, staff knowledge and approaches to managing pupil behaviour show improvement following training on trauma.

The school empowers staff to take ownership of their own professional learning. She encourages them to undertake their own research and share their learning with each other regularly. Staff have good opportunities to collaborate, share practice and to provide support to one another. For example, staff highlighted improvements made in their mathematics teaching through use of practical resources following work with other teachers. In addition, there are valuable opportunities to work with staff from other schools to further develop teaching practice and provision. For example, through work with staff from cluster schools, opportunities for peer assessment improved.

The school adopts a community-focussed approach paying due regard to the impact of poverty on attainment. The headteacher and governing body know the community and its needs well. They collaborate effectively with a range of partners to provide additional support for pupils and their families. For example, through collaboration with the local youth service, the school provides additional support to a few pupils with high levels of need. Effective use is made of the pupil development grant to provide interventions for pupils eligible for free school meals or from low-income households. This has led to improvements in the well-being, attendance and the progress of most of these pupils.

Governors provide passionate care and support for the school. They have a clear understanding of national priorities and they work effectively alongside school leaders to monitor the impact of strategic initiatives, such as the impact of support for vulnerable pupils. Governors also use their own expertise to support school progress effectively. For example, governors' work to monitor curriculum developments led to improvements in the school's provision for cynefin. Governors support the school well to promote healthy eating and drinking and they ensure that arrangements for safeguarding are robust. The headteacher works effectively alongside the governing body to manage and monitor school finances and resources.

## 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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