



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

A report on

Ysgol Meifod

**Meifod
Powys
SY22 6DF**

Date of inspection: October 2023

by

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

About Ysgol Meifod

Name of provider	Ysgol Meifod
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	70
Pupils of statutory school age	61
Number in nursery classes	
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%)	10.7%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 16.1%)	3.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2014
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	23/06/2016
Start date of inspection	02/10/2023

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection. Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Nearly all pupils are happy and proud to belong to Ysgol Meifod and the surrounding community. They enjoy school and the opportunities it provides. Almost without exception, standards of pupils' behaviour are excellent. When they join the school, most pupils have good social and communication skills. From their starting points, they generally make suitable progress in most areas of learning during their time at school. In a few instances, pupils make extremely good progress. They particularly enjoy learning experiences that relate to real life contexts that challenge them to think and apply their skills to a high level. However, across the school, pupils do not always receive the right level of challenge. Teachers' expectations for their learning are not always high enough and at times this limits pupils' progress.

All staff show high levels of care for pupils. They model positive behaviours, develop nurturing relationships, and get to know pupils' personalities and interests well. Staff provide a broad range of beneficial learning experiences for pupils within and beyond the school day. Increasingly, they take advantage of valuable opportunities to use the local area and community as a powerful stimulus for learning. However, at times and especially for younger pupils, adults tend to direct too much of the learning. Opportunities for pupils to learn through play and to make choices about their learning are limited.

The headteacher develops a team and family ethos at the school successfully. Pupils, staff and parents benefit from his caring and approachable leadership style. In partnership with staff and governors, the headteacher seeks out suitable opportunities to improve the school's work. This includes recent work to improve standards of Welsh at the school. Partnership work with the local cluster of schools is also beneficial, for instance in supporting the school to develop its curriculum. However, the school's leadership does not currently use improvement processes and professional learning well enough to ensure standards of teaching and learning at the school are as strong as they could be.

Recommendations

- R1 Use evaluation, improvement processes and professional learning strategically to improve teaching and progress in learning across the school
- R2 Better match the level of challenge and the teaching approaches used to pupils' developmental needs

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils begin school with literacy and social skills that are at or above those expected for their age. Overall, they make at least appropriate progress with the development of these and other skills during their time at the school. There is no notable difference in the progress of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) generally make suitable progress towards their individual targets.

Throughout the school, pupils are highly confident and enthusiastic in their use of digital devices and when completing tasks that challenge them to use their skills. Many younger pupils access relevant digital programmes swiftly. They input simple information and manipulate text with confidence. By the time they leave the school, most pupils develop and apply a range of digital skills to enhance and present their learning across the curriculum successfully. For example, they code interesting games to represent Michael's journey to Kensuke's Kingdom and use databases effectively to create a card game about world religions. Older pupils make purposeful choices about which digital programme is most useful to their current task. This helps them to represent their learning in ways that are effective and personal to them.

Many pupils make good progress in mathematics. Many younger pupils have a strong understanding of numbers and their value. They learn about basic angles and use their 'angle eaters' enthusiastically to find right angles in the classroom environment. As they move through the school, many pupils develop a good understanding of place value and use an appropriate range of written methods to solve calculations. By the time they leave the school, many pupils apply their numerical reasoning skills appropriately to solve multi-step problems.

Across the school, most pupils develop their speaking and listening skills well to support their learning and to build and maintain relationships. Most younger pupils listen carefully to adults and follow instructions diligently. They speak clearly and discuss their experiences in school, such as the various visits they undertake, happily. Most older pupils listen well and show respect for the views of their peers. They develop a good range of vocabulary, which they use to share their thoughts and ideas with others effectively.

Most pupils develop good reading skills. They have positive attitudes towards books and enjoy reading aloud to others. By the end of Year 2, most pupils develop suitable fluency and discuss their books with enthusiasm and accuracy. Most older pupils answer questions about their books well, demonstrating sound understanding of the text they have read and an overall enjoyment of reading. A few older pupils use inference to find additional meaning in texts. For example, when reading *A Wolf Called Wander*, they sensibly suggest that the wolf has minimal language because he is a pup.

Many pupils develop their writing skills appropriately during their time at school. Younger pupils write simple words and sentences suitably. In general, they use basic phonetic knowledge well to help them spell familiar words. As they move through the

school, pupils begin to write with increasing accuracy, forming sentences and paragraphs appropriately. Most older pupils' writing is sound and, in a few cases, it is very good. When writing for different purposes and audiences they apply their skills efficiently, for example when writing letters to members of the community thanking them for making donations to their fundraising activities. However, pupils do not write for a wide enough range of purposes or to the standard that they could.

Most pupils' Welsh language skills develop well during their time at school. Most younger pupils take part in Helpwr Heddiw sessions enthusiastically and respond appropriately to questions using simple words and phrases. Most older pupils develop an appropriate range of Welsh language vocabulary and pronounce words well. When reading a poem, a few older pupils use sound logic to establish the meaning of unfamiliar Welsh words by using contextual clues.

Many pupils develop appropriate creative skills. They learn about the work of well-known artists such as Matisse and experiment with techniques to create their own images. Older pupils learn to critique works of art and many express their opinions using a good range of vocabulary. A majority of older pupils are becoming confident in applying creative approaches to problem solving. for example when they work out the best angle to position pipes to transport human waste into the sewerage system.

Most pupils make good progress in the development of their physical skills. For example, younger pupils roll and balance with care and tiptoe in the style of the big bad wolf using an appropriate range of movements with good control. Older pupils take good advantage of a valuable range of opportunities to develop their sporting skills. Most build their strength, stamina and ball skills well.

When given the opportunity, many younger pupils demonstrate appropriate play skills. They use suitable language to communicate with adults and other pupils and use practical resources effectively. The lack of opportunities available to them means that a few younger pupils are unsure how to use play resources to good effect. This limits their ability to develop important independent learning skills.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils enjoy school, feel safe and valued and are proud to be part of the learning community. They trust adults in school, know who to turn to for support, and are confident in asking for help when needed. The extremely positive relationships that pupils develop with adults at school enhance the pupils' well-being and sense of belonging. Nearly all pupils arrive to school on time and rates of attendance at school are good overall.

The behaviour of nearly all pupils is excellent as they move around the school, in lessons, in whole-school services, and on the playground. They are polite and welcoming and treat adults and their peers with respect. From a young age they speak enthusiastically about their work and experiences in school and are happy to share these with visitors.

Many pupils are suitably engaged in their class tasks, they show compliance and a willingness to learn. However, a minority of pupils are occasionally too passive in their learning and say that they find the work too easy. Nearly all pupils work

collaboratively on tasks. For example, younger pupils working in pairs to collect data about things their classmates like. They listen attentively to their peers and show consideration for their contributions. Pupils solve problems and make decisions effectively as part of their learning when they have the opportunity. For example, they decide the best venue locally to host the school's 'Bingo Bash'. Pupils act purposefully on any verbal feedback they receive during the lesson to improve their work. However, occasionally pupils spend too much time redrafting and retyping the same piece of work. This improvement in the quality of work does not always represent good value for the time invested.

Pupils in the oldest classes enjoy contributing ideas at the start of new topics and are beginning to be able to direct their own activities. However, the extent to which pupils develop as independent learners is variable as they move through the school and linked to the quality of the opportunities given to them. The provision for younger pupils is generally shaped by adults and there are few opportunities for pupils to lead their own learning or play. In a few instances, older pupils show good levels of independence, for example when engaging with home-learning tasks or when working creatively to solve problems relating to their work.

Nearly all older pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online. For example, they know not to share their passwords. Many pupils develop their physical skills well as they progress through the school. They regularly take part in a range of physical activities in school and through after school clubs. They are proud to represent their school in sporting events, for example the netball and tag rugby teams reaching the semi-finals of the North Powys and local primary schools tournament. During well-being sessions, pupils reflect appropriately on how exercise makes them feel and consider how this helps them to stay healthy. Many pupils can identify healthy and unhealthy foods and use this knowledge effectively to plan nourishing meals. They also identify how their actions and choices impact the environment both locally and world-wide when considering why they should look after our world.

Most pupils feel that their voice is heard in school and that they are able to affect change. For example, younger pupils are planning changes to their outdoor area. They express their likes and needs and consider the safety of themselves and others. For example, they raise concerns about how go-karts may be dangerous if ridden too fast and the need for these to have seat belts. Older pupils develop a suitable understanding of their rights and of how they can influence matters that affect them, for example through the work of groups such as the Criw Cymraeg, eco-school and the school council.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school is developing aspects of its curriculum well and in accordance with the ethos of Curriculum for Wales. For example, staff are beginning to take advantage of valuable opportunities in the local area to provide real life contexts for learning. This includes a project about architecture and the properties of materials used to build a modern house. Opportunities for pupils to decide what they would like to learn about within their locality are another emerging strength within the school's curriculum. This work strengthens pupils' sense of belonging to the local area and provides them with a basis to make comparisons when learning about other cultures and places in the

world. There are appropriate arrangements for pupils to learn about faiths, cultures and customs from around the world and about the features of healthy relationships.

The school's curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced and supports most pupils to make at least appropriate progress during their time at school. A recently introduced approach to using whole school topics, such as 'why am I so special?' enables staff to plan collaboratively. This strengthens the team ethos at the school and enables staff to develop a shared understanding of what is happening in other classes. In all classes, teachers and support staff establish and maintain positive working relationships with pupils. Staff are effective language role models in English and Welsh. For example, staff working with younger pupils model mathematical language effectively.

Provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills is developing well. It supports pupils to use the language purposefully in Welsh lessons and, in a few instances, during other learning experiences. For example, younger pupils use the Welsh names for shapes with confidence during mathematics work. Pupils have good opportunities to use their digital skills for a range of purposes to support their work across the curriculum.

There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Where teaching develops these skills well, teachers challenge pupils to use their existing skills in interesting real-life contexts with a clear purpose. Pupils respond well to the challenge and produce good work. However, teachers do not present this level of challenge often enough. Where teaching is less effective, teachers are not always clear about what skills, knowledge or understanding they want pupils to develop in lessons or sequences of lessons. Occasionally, this causes confusion for pupils, and they do not know what they need to do to be successful.

Most staff use questioning successfully to challenge pupils' thinking and instant verbal feedback is effective in supporting pupils to make progress in completing tasks. However, teaching approaches do not always match the developmental needs of pupils well enough. Teachers do not use on going assessment of learning well enough to inform their teaching. They tend to use pupils' age groups as guides for their work rather than pupils' individual developmental needs. In addition, learning experiences for the younger pupils are normally directed by adults. These pupils do not have enough opportunities to lead their own learning or to learn and develop skills through play. Teachers encourage pupils to develop as independent learners and, at times, this supports pupils to flourish. However, teachers do not always provide pupils with the skills or experiences they need to develop their independence progressively as they move through school.

Care, support and guidance

Across the school staff develop nurturing and caring relationships with pupils. They place a strong emphasis on knowing pupils as individuals. This enables them to provide tailored care and support to enhance pupils' well-being as and when the need arises. As a result, nearly all pupils have a positive attitude to school life. Teachers model and promote good behaviour through their interactions with pupils and each other. The school has a co-operative relationship with parents. Overall,

parents value the care and guidance their children receive from the staff. This contributes strongly to the homely feeling that exists at the school.

The school makes suitable provision for pupils with ALN. The ALN co-ordinator and teaching staff quickly identify the needs of pupils and use this information to set relevant progress targets and to provide additional support. There are appropriate arrangements to involve parents in setting the targets for their children. Suitable one-page profiles include useful information about pupils' individual needs and what they need to develop further.

The school plans and delivers regular interventions to provide support to develop pupils' basic mathematics and reading skills. This supports pupils to make appropriate progress from their individual starting points and boosts their confidence in these areas of learning and in the classroom. Formal processes to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention strategies and to track the progress of pupils with ALN are in the early stages of development. The ALN co-ordinator has made worthwhile links within the local cluster of schools and is beginning to use this network well for support and guidance for individual pupils and to develop school practices. The school works suitably with a range of external agencies to support a very few pupils, for example the educational psychology service and services for pupils with English as an additional language.

The school has a strong relationship with the local community and takes full advantage of opportunities to hold activities in the village. There are worthwhile opportunities for pupils to take part in performances and events locally, for example the Village Show where pupils compete in competitions such as craft, growing potatoes and sunflowers and writing poetry.

The school's provision supports pupils to recognise the needs and rights of others. For example, there are opportunities for pupils to raise funds for national charities that benefit children. Staff are beginning to provide opportunities for pupils to influence issues relating to school life through the activities of the school council and the eco council. For example, members of the eco council have identified where the school could save energy and recycle more paper. Staff provide positive support for pupils' physical health and well-being through a range of activities and after-school clubs such as digital activity clubs, choir and sports clubs. The school makes appropriate provision for acts of collective worship.

The school works proactively with outside agencies to monitor and track attendance of all pupils. As a result of school processes, attendance levels have returned to pre-pandemic levels. The school's arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher sets a calm but purposeful tone for the school's work. He ensures that all members of the school community feel supported and valued for their contributions. This leadership ensures that pupils experience a positive and caring learning environment and that all staff have high expectations for pupils' well-being. The positive culture and ethos support pupils to be happy, to form positive

relationships with their peers and staff and to make good progress in their personal and social development.

Leaders ensure that pupils develop a strong sense of belonging to the school and local community through effective partnership work with parents and local organisations. This includes valuable opportunities to learn about the local area and the effective use of professional expertise from within the community to enhance the school's curriculum.

Leaders are making sound progress in developing their interpretation of Curriculum for Wales. The learning experiences provided generally engage pupils and support them to make suitable progress in their development as learners during their time at school. However, leaders do not focus sharply enough on improving the quality of teaching across the school. As a result, pupils do not always make the progress they could.

There are appropriate arrangements to allocate roles and responsibilities. These include a recent move to increase the school's leadership capacity by providing all members of the small team of teachers with opportunities to contribute to leading aspects of school improvement. This work, particularly when supported by relevant professional learning, is beginning to have a positive influence, for example in improving provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills and in beginning to implement the national priority to reform provision for pupils with ALN. However, professional learning opportunities to improve staff leadership skills and the quality of teaching are limited overall.

School leaders have limited time to engage in evaluation and improvement activity. In a few instances, they use first hand evidence appropriately as part of the improvement process. For example, they use data from national test outcomes to identify opportunities to improve provision for reading and to develop pupils' mathematical reasoning skills. However, arrangements to observe and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning are underdeveloped. Leaders do not focus sharply enough on identifying the difference that teaching makes to pupils' progress and the development of their skills. Leaders are not getting the most value out of the time that they allocate to this type of activity.

School leaders generally focus improvement work on relevant local or national priorities but tend to try to address too many priorities at the same time. They are not always clear about the impact that they expect improvement work to have on pupils' progress. This makes it difficult for them to evaluate to what extent their work has been successful. There are suitable performance management processes that link appropriately to the school's improvement processes.

The governing body is enthusiastic and provides appropriate support and challenge to the school's work. They focus their work on ensuring that pupils are happy and safe in school. They gain an appropriate picture of the school's work through their own monitoring activities and have a suitable understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The governing body works successfully with the headteacher to achieve a positive safeguarding culture across the school. Governors ensure that suitable policies are in place to promote healthy eating and drinking.

School leaders manage finances, including the pupil development grant, carefully to provide additional learning support for pupils and to fund school improvement initiatives. The Friends of the School are proactive in finding funding to support the school to improve the resources available to pupils. However, arrangements to ensure that enough time is available for leaders to undertake all leadership responsibilities robustly and effectively are not currently in place.

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)

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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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