



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

A report on

Ysgol Bro Tawe

**Ffordd yr Afon
Ystradgynlais
Swansea
SA9 1BU**

Date of inspection: February 2024

by

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

About Ysgol Bro Tawe

Name of provider	Ysgol Bro Tawe
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	206
Pupils of statutory school age	179
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 23.7%)	21.6%
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%)	5.4%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	3.9%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2020
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	25/01/2016
Start date of inspection	19/02/2024

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

Pupils' well-being is at the heart of Ysgol Bro Tawe and staff work hard to make sure the school is a thoughtful and inclusive environment. This togetherness is demonstrated by the positive working relationships between staff and pupils. Teachers generally think carefully about how pupils learn best and use a range of appropriate methods to engage them successfully in their learning. All staff develop their professional skills and knowledge together well, and this enables them to adjust provision to meet the needs of individual pupils. The standard of care, support and guidance provided across the school community is strong and underpins the school's vision, 'learning to live, living to learn'.

Pupils enjoy attending school. They are eager to talk to adults and speak confidently about how proud they are of their school. Pupils feel safe and well cared for, and they trust that adults will always support them through difficult times. As they move through the school, most pupils make good or better progress from their individual starting points and use their knowledge and skills effectively in their work across the curriculum. The school genuinely values the pupils' opinions. They have suitable opportunities to influence the work of the school and are delighted to work alongside school leaders to bring about change.

Across the school, pupils develop positive attitudes to reading and writing and enjoy many opportunities to be physically active. They use digital tools well to support their learning and develop their Welsh language skills highly effectively. Teachers engage with their pupils to plan learning experiences that capture their interests, such as staying healthy and in the world of work. Pupils' number skills develop well across the school. However, opportunities for pupils to learn other aspects of mathematics, such as shape, area and time, in more depth, are less well developed. When given the opportunities, pupils are keen to do well and to take on new challenges. However, too often work to extend and challenge pupils during lessons is underdeveloped.

The headteacher shows strong, compassionate leadership. Along with the support of school leaders and governors, she has developed an enthusiastic team of professionals, who have a robust understanding of the needs of the pupils and the local community. Partnerships with parents are strong and the school has earned their confidence. These partnerships prove particularly beneficial when leaders and staff are deciding the right approaches to adopt so that their pupils can flourish. Leaders and staff are well on their way to implementing a curriculum that is authentic and reflects the needs of the community. School leaders and governors keep the work of the school under close review and there are good arrangements for monitoring the quality of ongoing school improvements.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that all pupils are suitably challenged to extend their learning within lessons
- R2 Ensure that the mathematics curriculum is broad and balanced

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), those eligible for free school meals and pupils within the Autistic Spectrum Centre (ASC), make good and at times very good progress from their individual starting points.

Younger pupils speak confidently about their work and listen well to other pupils and their teachers. By the time they reach Year 2, pupils respond well to their peers, ask appropriate questions, and express their opinions whilst showing respect for others. As pupils move through the school, they continue to develop their speaking and listening skills well. Most older pupils become articulate, have a good vocabulary and express their views on current news events enthusiastically.

Over time, most pupils develop their reading skills successfully. The youngest pupils use a range of phonic strategies to read familiar and unfamiliar words. Many Year 1 and Year 2 pupils read with accuracy and fluency. Most older pupils read accurately in various contexts. By Year 6, pupils are avid, competent readers who show a lively interest and enthusiasm when reading for different purposes.

Most of the younger pupils make good progress in developing their writing skills. They begin to record their ideas through mark making, forming legible letters and writing simple words. For example, younger pupils collect charcoal from their forest school and use this to create pictures and form letters. Older pupils write effectively in a range of different forms choosing vocabulary carefully and using capital letters and full stops accurately. Many older pupils develop their writing skills creatively across different genres. They use adjectives, different sentence structures and appropriate punctuation to enhance their work. For example, they write imaginative poems about the challenging life of a Celt soldier.

From a young age, pupils begin to develop their Welsh speaking skills well and are keen to use the Welsh in a range of contexts. As they progress, pupils interchange

English and Welsh words confidently, for example when exploring descriptions of themselves and their friends. Many older pupils hold extended conversations with their peers and staff in Welsh, using good quality vocabulary, and speak with clear and accurate pronunciation and intonation.

In all year groups, pupils use their mathematical skills competently and confidently in lessons. The youngest pupils enjoy counting, recite number rhymes enthusiastically and achieve a firm grasp of numbers and their value. Year 2 pupils use comparative vocabulary to describe their findings, for example when creating a timeline to record the development of wrappers found on a bar of chocolate. Older pupils use data confidently and create tally charts and line graphs of the cooling rates of water when using a variety of materials to insulate a container. By the time they leave school, most pupils use their number skills confidently.

Most pupils use digital equipment confidently and develop their digital skills successfully as they move through the school. In Year 1, pupils programme a toy to navigate around a path and use apps to support their learning in literacy, numeracy and creative skills. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 3 use tablet computers as dictionaries and record themselves speaking and performing. Most older pupils use their digital skills well to support independent research and present their findings through creative presentations, for instance when creating an interactive poster to recruit soldiers for Owain Glyndwr's army and using video effectively to publish poems and stories about Remembrance Day.

Most pupils develop their thinking and creative skills well. Younger pupils readily talk about their learning experiences and begin to develop an understanding of purpose. For example, when making superhero capes, pupils purchase resources on a limited budget to make and decorate a superhero cape after reading the story 'A Superpower Like Mine'. Most of the older pupils apply prior learning experiences to plan and create effective poems highlighting the effects of war on civilians. They design useful welcome packs for refugees who have moved into the village. The packs contain information about the school and key medical services. Pupils' welcome letters to asylum seekers have recently won awards from the Welsh Heritage Schools Initiative.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils have positive working relationships with all staff that help to support their well-being considerably. Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school. They know to speak to a trusted member of staff if they are worried and most are confident that staff will deal quickly and effectively with any concerns. As a result of the strong culture of safeguarding across the school, most pupils feel safe, secure and ready to learn.

Pupils in the Autistic Spectrum Centre, Canolfan Heulwen, are happy and calm and feel safe in their learning environment. Often, when pupils feel overwhelmed, they make good use of classroom reflection areas to identify and manage their feelings and choose a strategy to manage their emotions thoughtfully, for instance by choosing to access the class sensory room.

Across the school, most pupils behave consistently well as they move around the building, in lessons and on the playground. They are caring, accepting and respectful

towards each other, staff and visiting adults. Nearly all pupils say that the school's values help them to treat people fairly. For example, older pupils understand that conflict sometimes arises in team games, such as football, and have developed strategies to resolve these independently.

Most pupils understand the importance of physical exercise. They take advantage of a wide range of effective after-school clubs that enable them to develop their physical skills and to keep fit, such as when attending football training with the Swansea Community Trust and when learning outdoors in the school's forest area. Pupils proudly represent their school in sporting tournaments, such as netball, rugby and football.

Most pupils know the importance of staying healthy and learn about balanced diets. They understand how to stay safe online and that they should talk to a trusted adult if issues arise, for instance when searching for information on the internet. They know how to keep their personal details safe when working online.

Nearly all pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning and sustain concentration throughout learning activities. They approach lessons with enthusiasm and display enjoyment during their tasks, for example when designing new products for Siop Conti. Younger pupils transition between activities with ease and settle quickly to new tasks.

Older pupils discuss ethical issues with maturity. For example, when exploring ethical veganism, they identify how some animals are sentient beings like humans. Pupils demonstrate good creative and enterprising skills in a range of contexts, such as when designing, creating and selling bath bombs or wreaths as part of their entrepreneurial and enrichment work.

Nearly all pupils appreciate the support available from staff or their friends when they are stuck; it helps them to figure things out without giving them the answers. Most pupils feel that the school listens to their suggestions and at times acts upon their ideas. Many belong to a range of pupil voice groups and take on a variety of roles that develop their leadership skills appropriately. However, on occasions, staff over-direct this work. The pupils in the Criw Cymraeg have a very positive effect on the rest of the school, for instance by suggesting a Welsh phrase of the week and then keenly encouraging all pupils throughout the day to engage in 'Welsh chat'.

Pupils are confident and courteous when talking to visitors. They share their work with pride and clearly explain what they have done well and how they could improve. Nearly all pupils celebrate the successes of their peers with a clap, a well done or smile. Pupils in Canolfan Heulwen express themselves clearly with appropriate enthusiasm when explaining the interventions they receive and the positive impact these have on their well-being, health and learning. They are very proud of their roles within pupil groups and their valuable contribution towards these.

Teaching and learning experiences

Leaders and teachers have a clear vision for the school curriculum focused on motivating everyone to do their best and reach their full potential. Teachers and leaders are refining their approach through regular reflection. As a result, the school

is developing its curriculum progressively through authentic learning opportunities aligned to the Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs) and the four purposes.

Teachers know the pupils well and plan an effective range of intuitive and innovative approaches that meet most pupils' needs. They often use interesting introductions at the start of lessons to engage pupils' interests, use questioning effectively and adapt their teaching skilfully to address misconceptions and support pupils' understanding. Overall, teachers create positive working environments and valuable opportunities for pupils to collaborate. However, opportunities to challenge and extend pupils' learning in lessons are less well developed.

Across the school, most teachers and teaching assistants provide appropriate feedback during lessons. Younger pupils benefit from the continuous support they receive during their learning to make small but important next steps. Older pupils have appropriate opportunities to reflect on their work and to identify their next steps in learning. They often assess the work of their peers, identifying what they have done well and how they could do better.

Provision to develop pupils' digital and literacy skills across the school is effective. Teachers use assessments well to inform their planning so that pupils' skills build progressively as they move through the school. Overall, teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge of numerical concepts. However, they do not always plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop and deepen their knowledge in important areas, including shape, space, measures and time.

The school fosters a strong Welsh ethos where most staff have high aspirations for the development of pupils' Welsh communication skills. Welsh is modelled well by staff, and pupils engage enthusiastically in opportunities to use the Welsh language in their learning throughout the day. Pupils enjoy learning about their locality and where they are in Wales, for example by exploring the history of the local ironworks that made the gates for Buckingham Palace and by studying the history of local coalmining. There are strong links with the local church who conduct services in school as well as welcoming regular visits to the church from school classes. The school has an extensive library including books celebrating the diverse culture of Wales. Opportunities to celebrate these cultures feature regularly throughout the year, for example with Diwali and Chinese New Year.

The school is well resourced, and all areas of the school are bright and inviting. Staff ensure that pupils develop a love for outdoor learning. They plan regular, purposeful activities for pupils outdoors. For example, all pupils and staff take part in the 'daily mile' and well-planned forest school activities provide pupils with learning experiences that enhances their understanding of nature and support their well-being successfully.

Teachers plan worthwhile visits to enhance learning. Recent visits to St Fagan's and residential trips to the Urdd centre in Cardiff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their teamwork, resilience and independence further. The school's planning to develop pupils' awareness of their local history and the culture of Wales is a strength. For example, pupils have opportunities to research the history of their local area, when setting up an outdoor café, Siop Conti, after studying a shop in the

village, which was owned by the great, great grandparents of a current pupil. Older pupils' study local artists such as Josef Herman's mining pictures.

The school's provision to develop pupils' ability to maintain healthy relationships is effective. For example, teachers ensure that pupils develop an understanding of the features of positive and negative relationships and know that there are different types of families. The school fosters a strong sense of belonging, and its focus on values supports pupils to form and maintain friendships successfully. For example, pupils prepared thoughtful welcome packs for refugees who are new to the area with information sheets about the locality, contact details for medical services and a history of the school and village.

Care, support and guidance

The provision for pupils' well-being at Ysgol Bro Tawe is exemplary. A caring ethos permeates school life, creating an inclusive environment where all pupils and adults are valued and supported to become capable learners. The school works closely with parents and carers to ensure that their children's well-being is a priority. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school and trust staff to help them when necessary.

Positive relationships pervade the school community and contribute significantly to pupils' attainment, happiness and well-being. Staff place a strong emphasis on knowing pupils as individuals and are committed to meeting their individual needs.

The school's nurture provision for pupils is strong. Teachers provide a wide range of classroom strategies to enable pupils to identify their emotions and to manage these effectively through, reflection zones, check-ins and mood boards. A dedicated team of learning assistants support pupils to regulate their emotions successfully, ensuring that classrooms are calm and happy places for all pupils. The school works closely with parents to quickly identify pupils that may need extra emotional support outside of the classroom. Well-trained learning support assistants provide a wide range of interventions to support pupils' needs. Staff monitor the impact of these on individual pupils well.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is effective. It is carefully planned and supports pupils' needs appropriately. Regular pupil progress meetings between senior leaders and teachers identify pupils' additional educational, social, emotional needs at an early stage and provide for them effectively. Staff offer suitable interventions and effective in class support that enables identified pupils to make good progress to catch up with their peers. For example, focused literacy interventions have helped younger pupils to make considerable gains in reading in a very short period of time.

Staff provide strong support for pupils' physical health and well-being through a range of activities. These include encouraging pupils to take part in the daily mile, and providing a wide variety of after-school clubs such as football run by Swansea city Community Trust, netball, and gymnastics, as well as extensive opportunities to use the outdoors. Computer and homework clubs further support pupils that may not have access to equipment at home or simply want to improve their skills. Older pupils also participate in more adventurous activities during their annual residential visit.

The design and accessibility of Canolfan Heulwen allows pupils to learn individually at workstations, alongside an adult or as a group. Well-established systems and routines assist pupils with smooth transitions between activities. The school ensures that pupils within the centre have supported access to mainstream settings where appropriate. The school makes good use of the expertise of the staff in the centre to provide strategies and support for mainstream teachers and pupils with additional learning needs across the school.

The schools ensures that parents are appropriately involved in the creation of support plans for their children, and that they feel confident that the school will listen to them when they raise concerns about their child. Staff provide valuable support to individual parents and carers on issues outside of the school day. As a result, parents feel fully involved in their child's education and a full part of the school community.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Nearly all pupils engage positively in daily prayer and reflection either in class or whole-school assemblies. Many pupils explore the religious beliefs of people around the world as part of their curriculum activities.

The school encourages pupils to undertake important leadership roles through representation on a wide variety of pupil groups, such as Active Ambassadors, who monitor and track pupils' travel habits to school, and promote walking and cycling enthusiastically. This initiative has seen a significant increase in the number of pupils that now walk or cycle to school. The pupils value these positions and talk about their work with delight.

The whole-school 'Careers Week' provides pupils with interesting workshops on a variety of jobs held by parents and the school community. These include a carpentry workshop to build houses in the forest school and a talk on analysing human waste. In addition, as part of the school entrepreneurial work, pupils create and sell well-being brooches from wood collected in the forest school. Each brooch displays a QR code with positive well-wishes written by pupils.

Systems to monitor and improve attendance are robust. The school works appropriately with families and a range of outside agencies to improve individual pupil attendance. As a result, attendance figures are steadily increasing. The school's safeguarding culture is strong.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides highly effective, compassionate leadership. She has established a healthy culture of trust, teamwork, and a drive for improvement across the school. Along with the effective senior leadership team, she enables a continuous focus on building and maintaining positive relationships, supported by a strong knowledge of the needs of the pupils and community. All leaders and staff work diligently to meet these needs, with the firm belief that all pupils should receive high-quality provision that enables them to achieve as well as they can. This work is strengthened by a strong, shared safeguarding culture across the school.

The school has a clear vision for the education and well-being of all learners and implements this effectively. The vision, 'learning to live, living to learn' created by all stakeholders, has high aspirations for pupils, their families and the local community. It gives purpose to the school's work and underpins the high expectations that exist for pupils' welfare and progress. The roles and responsibilities of leaders and staff are well defined and communicated clearly. Overall, leaders have a good track record of improving pupil performance and the quality of education.

The headteacher builds leadership capacity successfully, and the wider leadership team contributes effectively to school improvement. There is strong leadership at all levels and this has improved the school's capacity to achieve change successfully. For example, work to implement ALN reform involved valuable training for all staff and thoughtful communication with parents. As a result, the school uses assessment processes, annual reviews and effective interventions to ensure that those receiving additional support make good progress.

Communication between home and school is effective and leaders ensure that staff are visible at key moments during the school day. The school's work in partnership with parents and support agencies is highly successful. Leaders think carefully about how to adapt the school's provision to ensure better engagement with parents. For example, the school invites parents to support the curriculum and enrich the children's experiences by visiting school and sharing their knowledge and experiences of the world of work. Staff assist parents sensitively when helping them to complete administrative tasks. Parents trust that the school is doing the right thing for their children and that staff will always act in their best interests.

Communication across the school is a strength. There is a clear timetable for evaluating the work of the school and leaders draw upon a range of first-hand information to inform their judgements. Overall, the school reviews and develops its provision diligently. For example, leaders identified a need to improve the reading skills of pupils across the school. Working closely with Bangor University into effective ways to enhance the standard of reading, leaders implemented a clear strategy across the school that has improved the reading ability of most pupils and fostered a positive culture of reading.

Leaders place a high priority on developing the skills of all staff, and work to develop the school as a learning organisation is progressing well. There is an ongoing focus on improving teaching to improve pupil outcomes. Staff have used professional learning opportunities successfully to undertake research to improve their teaching and that of their colleagues. For instance, leaders support teachers to improve their knowledge and understanding of Welsh and, as a result, pupils' Welsh oracy skills are a strength across the school.

Work to address national priorities is ongoing and effective. There is a clear focus on refining the school's approaches to implementing Curriculum for Wales and addressing ALN reform. The school has robust processes to track pupils' progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills and most pupils' digital skills are strong. In addition, leaders are fully committed to tackling poverty in a sensitive and thoughtful way in the school and the local community.

The governing body is well informed, effective and committed to supporting the work of the school. Governors have a diverse and valuable set of skills matched to their roles and responsibilities, they use these well, for example to support leaders in matters of school finance. They understand the school's improvement priorities well, and eagerly support school leaders to evaluate the work of the school, for instance by visiting regularly to undertake learning walks and to listen to pupils. Governors ensure that the school uses its grant funding effectively to deliver targeted support for vulnerable pupils. They make appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking and are fully committed to supporting the school staff and leaders' well-being.

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

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.wales

© Crown Copyright 2024: This report may be re used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 24/04/2024