



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

A report on

Ysgol Bro Famau

**Eryrys Road
Llanarmon-yn-Ial
Denbighshire
CH7 4TB**

Date of inspection: May 2023

by

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

About Ysgol Bro Famau

Name of provider	Ysgol Bro Famau
Local authority	Denbighshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	64
Pupils of statutory school age	53
Number in nursery classes	6
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%)	*
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%)	15.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/11/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	19/05/2014
Start date of inspection	02/05/2023
<p>Ysgol Bro Famau has two sites. Pupils from Nursery to Year 2 attend the Llanferres site, while pupils in Year 3 to Year 6 spend their time at the Llanarmon site. When appropriate, for example for whole-school events, pupils are transported from one site to other by bus. Leaders and staff manage the use of the two sites very effectively.</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

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

Overview

Ysgol Bro Famau is a close-knit, inclusive school where everyone has a say in the way things work. This means that the headteacher, teachers, support staff, pupils, governors and parents work together efficiently and effectively for the benefit of pupils. The level of commitment from these stakeholders, along with the support of the wider community, makes this a particularly happy, hardworking and successful school.

Pupils' attitudes to learning and willingness to support one another in their work and play are especially notable. They appreciate the importance of learning and of gaining skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum, and do so with enthusiasm, interest and enjoyment. This zest for life and learning contributes strongly to their personal well-being, as well as the very good progress they make as they move through the school.

Teachers take good account of pupils' needs and opinions to plan interesting lessons and experiences that focus well on establishing pupils' basic skills and concepts. They follow these up with a range of engaging and challenging learning opportunities so that pupils can apply what they have learnt in different contexts, often in the school's extensive outdoor learning environment. The school's new curriculum is developing well, but it is too early to be sure that it will provide continuity and progression for all pupils over time.

All teachers are part of the strong leadership team. This enables them to collaborate closely with the headteacher and governors and to make a significant contribution to strategic matters, including school improvement. These close and productive working relationships mean that communication amongst staff is very effective. It enables teachers and support staff to respond quickly to important issues and, where appropriate, make changes to provision and practice that will benefit pupils without delay.

Recommendations

R1 Build on the well-established curriculum foundations to ensure continuity and progression in skills, knowledge and understanding for all pupils

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils enter the school with skills at a stage of development at or above that expected for their age. During their time in school, pupils flourish and nearly all make at least good progress from their starting points.

Most pupils listen exceptionally well to adults and other pupils, although a very few younger pupils do not yet appreciate the importance of paying attention when adults are speaking in group or class sessions. From an early age, most pupils express themselves clearly. They are eager to talk about their work and do so with understanding. Older pupils communicate thoughtfully with their friends and share their ideas confidently. They ask interesting questions that help to extend their thinking and make valuable contributions to discussions, taking good account of other pupils' views.

Most young pupils develop an interest in books and build their early reading skills quickly. They learn about the relationship between letters and sounds and read simple texts with increasing confidence. By Year 2, pupils read fluently and use their phonic knowledge well to tackle unfamiliar words. Older pupils discuss their favourite authors and styles of books enthusiastically. They read accurately, fluently and with expression that shows their understanding. Most have a strong grasp of a wide range of genres and use their skills of inference and deduction skilfully to understand the meaning of challenging vocabulary and to come to conclusions about plot and characters.

Most nursery and reception pupils establish their early writing skills effectively. They engage in well-designed activities to practise their gross motor skills and develop their mark-making in a variety of mediums. As they progress through the school, pupils learn to plan their writing effectively. Most show a good understanding of the features of different writing styles, for instance, when compiling information about a fictional character or writing a guide on how to rebel against Roman invaders. Most older pupils apply their writing skills across the curriculum confidently and creatively. They demonstrate a clear sense of purpose and use a wide and relevant vocabulary to enliven their writing. For example, when creating information leaflets and writing speeches, they use imaginative language that engages the reader.

From an early age, pupils listen to, understand and respond to the Welsh language throughout the day. As they move through the school, most gain a good understanding of a wide range of vocabulary, which they learn to use appropriately in an increasing range of sentence structures and contexts. Most develop the confidence to communicate effectively with staff, visitors and one another, for example, by answering and asking questions about themselves and familiar topics.

Most pupils make very good progress in building their mathematical understanding and numeracy skills. The youngest pupils begin to grasp a sense of number quickly, counting conkers, sticks and leaves when learning outdoors. They copy patterns, match shapes and spot the odd one out. By Year 2, most have a secure understanding of simple multiplication and they use this to help them solve

mathematical problems. Older pupils build well on this sound foundation, deepening and extending their understanding in all aspects of mathematics and eventually enabling them to approach problems and investigations thoughtfully and analytically. The oldest pupils have very strong number skills, and a particularly good understanding of the number system. This enables them to handle new mathematical concepts confidently. Many pupils, particularly those in Years 3 to 6, explain their thinking and describe the processes they work through with clarity.

Throughout the school, most pupils have increasingly strong digital skills that they use regularly to support and enhance their learning across the curriculum. Younger pupils use programmable devices skilfully, for example, when using programmable toys to find locations in London. Older children use technology to enhance learning effectively. A particularly interesting example of this is when Year 5 and 6 pupils use stop motion applications to record a building process and to populate an online timeline of when famous buildings were constructed to further their understanding of architecture through the ages. Most pupils develop strong coding and presentation skills and use technology confidently to share the findings from their independent research through videos, songs and visual presentations.

Many pupils demonstrate remarkable creativity in their approach to learning across the curriculum. For example, older pupils welcome the freedom they have to explore different approaches to presenting mathematical investigations, but their confidence to do this is a result of a gradual growth in independent learning skills from a young age. Similarly, pupils' physical skills increase steadily as they move through the school due to a strong focus on playing and learning in a range of indoor and outdoor environments. Young pupils run, hop and skip confidently and learn to throw and catch with increasingly accuracy in structured PE lessons and during free play. This contributes to the development of particularly strong fine motor skills over time. Year 3 and 4 pupils handle musical instruments with dexterity and the oldest pupils use pencils and drawing pens skilfully to create ink drawings of iconic buildings from around the world.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

The standard of pupils' well-being is a strong feature of the school. Pupils take great pride in their school and feel safe and secure in its inclusive environment. Most are confident to engage animatedly with one another, staff and visitors, but do so politely and respectfully. They develop high levels of trust and appreciation for their teachers and support staff and speak highly of the care and guidance they receive, which they clearly value. Nearly all pupils conduct themselves maturely for their age and are kind and considerate, particularly when supporting friends in class.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of making healthy choices and know how to keep themselves healthy. For example, they bring fruit to school for their breaktime snack and drink water regularly. Pupils engage in a range of physical and co-ordination skills during the many opportunities they have for outdoor learning during well-being Wednesday sessions, parachute games, and through playing a range of sports.

Pupils show a sense of responsibility towards their school and local community and make sure that their voices are heard about issues that matter to them. They

embrace leadership responsibilities eagerly in their roles on school committees, take charge of meetings and make their own, handwritten notes. Pupil groups take the lead in a range of important matters. For example, the eco-committee has recently undertaken an environmental review and a health, well-being and food review. The pupils talk confidently about the actions they are taking forward and there is a clear, school-wide impact of pupil voice, including recent improvements in the outside areas and the development of the Sied Ymlacio.

Pupils' behaviour in classes and around the school is excellent. Most develop highly positive attitudes to learning and are proud of their work and the things they achieve. They make the most of opportunities to collaborate with others in their work and play and engage eagerly with the breadth of experiences on offer. Nearly all pupils sustain their concentration for extended periods as they strive to do their best and respond to feedback from their teachers. This ability to remain on task and think and act independently when faced with challenges contributes significantly to their academic and social progress.

Teaching and learning experiences

Leaders and staff are working diligently towards creating an exciting whole-school curriculum. Liaising closely with pupils, parents and governors, they have developed a purposeful curriculum vision based on the school's values, which takes good account of the Curriculum for Wales. As they build on the foundations they have established, teachers reflect on what is working well and the aspects that could be better. In response, they refine their planning, and listen to pupils' ideas and suggestions to create a curriculum that is relevant and challenging.

Teachers collaborate well with one another to plan a range of rich, engaging learning experiences around a central theme. Each theme provides an appropriate context for developing pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding across all areas of learning. The content of these themes is relevant, broad and balanced, but as the curriculum is still developing, it is too early to be sure that it will provide continuity and progression for all pupils over time. A strong feature of the school's work to develop the curriculum is an ongoing series of immersion and enrichment weeks for pupils in Years 3 to 6 that teachers develop in partnership with pupils. These authentic learning experiences that take place in and outside the classroom environment, inspire pupil involvement and help pupils to become creative and independent thinkers and learners. Nearly all pupils find the challenge of these weeks particularly motivating, and they become absorbed in this approach to learning.

The school has a suitably structured approach to developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Good opportunities to develop speaking, reading and writing helps pupil progress well in these areas. Provision to strengthen pupils' mathematical skills and their use of numeracy across the curriculum is a particular strength and leads to high standards. Another notable feature of the curriculum is the way in which leaders and staff encourage pupils' interest in the cultural and linguistic nature of Wales and its heritage. As well as celebrating special events such as the annual Eisteddfod, pupils visit places linked to their topics, such as Cardiff City Stadium and the Roman amphitheatre in Chester. They appreciate Welsh artists and musicians and learn about influential Welsh citizens, such as John Davies, a Welsh scholar from Llanferres who was involved in translating the Bible into Welsh.

Teaching and support staff cooperate seamlessly to create a close and supportive ethos that helps pupils to feel comfortable and confident as they learn. Their positive approach encourages pupils to challenge themselves and try new things without being afraid to make mistakes. Teachers know their pupils' needs well and, in most lessons, they build well on pupils' prior learning to help them take their next steps. Overall, teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning.

Staff's confident and natural use of the Welsh language in teaching and informal situations is an integral part of school life. They immerse pupils in the language, and this means that pupils hear, understand, and respond to Welsh throughout the school day from an early age. This helps pupils to understand the advantages of learning Welsh and contributes to their enthusiasm for learning the language.

Adults use questioning effectively to challenge pupils and promote their thinking about what they are learning and how they might approach a task or problem. The learning intentions of lessons and success criteria are clear, and this helps pupils to understand what is expected of them and how they will measure the success of their work. Teachers and support staff talk to pupils about their learning as they work and play and use effective methods to check pupils' understanding. They encourage pupils to reflect on the feedback they receive and respond to suggestions to improve their work.

Care, support and guidance

The quality of the care, support and guidance the school offers to its pupils and their families is one of the keys to its success. Warm and caring working relationships between staff and pupils underpin the school's ethos. Staff help pupils to appreciate and live by the school's values. This promotes good behaviour and means that nearly all pupils develop respect, understanding and tolerance towards others. It also supports the school's work to encourage good attendance.

Pupils have many opportunities to develop their understanding of citizenship during their time at the school. They may be committee members in one of the pupil voice groups, or contribute as a 'back-bencher' in the school's Senedd. This enables all pupils to hear about the decisions that pupil groups have made and offers opportunities for them to contribute directly to discussions.

Teachers and support staff target pupils' individual needs very well. Staff consider pupils' emotional well-being to be a priority. Over time, they have worked together to develop a range of effective interventions to ensure that pupils receive the support that best suits them. For example, pupils can use 'bubble time' to talk to staff on their own, or more specialised support is available, if needed. There are effective systems for the early identification of pupils with additional learning needs and this helps to ensure that they receive support quickly. Skilled staff offer a variety of literacy and numeracy interventions that they tailor to pupils' individual needs. They monitor pupils' progress regularly to ensure that interventions meet their needs and to enable staff to communicate progress accurately to parents. Nearly all pupils who benefit from these programmes make good progress.

The school promotes equality, diversity and inclusion effectively through a range of creative activities, including anti-bullying projects. Whole-school and class

assemblies provide beneficial opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual and moral understanding, for example when considering connections between faiths through the theme of light. Approaches to developing pupils' personal and social skills through links with the community, for instance, help pupils to appreciate issues relating to their well-being and lifestyle choices. The effective use of visitors from the community, such as members of local places of worship, helps pupils to feel part of the community and encourages their participation in community projects.

There is a very strong culture of safety and well-being in the school. All staff and governors know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. They take particular care to ensure the security of both school sites and have a thorough understanding of safeguarding arrangements.

Leadership and management

School leaders have established a clear vision for Ysgol Bro Famau that all stakeholders, including parents and pupils, have contributed to. The headteacher and staff ensure that the well-being and progress of pupils is at the heart of this vision. This is reflected in the school's 'five-star' approach to learning, which links closely to the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales and pupils understand well.

The headteacher and her staff have a collaborative approach to all aspects of the school's work. This helps to create a strong community ethos in the school and results in a high level of understanding and commitment from all stakeholders. For example, a collective approach to, and responsibility for, promoting the school's safeguarding culture means that pupils feel safe and secure as they learn. Leaders have established a culture of high expectations for themselves, for staff and for pupils. Everyone responds positively to these expectations, resulting in an engaged staff team and high-quality provision for pupils.

The input of the governing body to school life, and the support and challenge governors provide for school leaders and staff is impressive. Governors have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the way the school works, including how it identifies and addresses improvement priorities. This detailed insight enables governors to act skilfully and professionally for the benefit of pupils. Governors take their statutory duties very seriously, including ensuring that the school has appropriate arrangements for healthy and drinking.

School leaders and governors monitor spending carefully, including grant funding. They have a secure understanding of the school's finances and act prudently to ensure that resources are allocated wisely and in response to school improvement priorities. This includes the use of the Pupil Development Grant which supports identified pupils to attend school trips and residential visits.

The school's priorities for improvement are clear and relevant. Leaders identify them through a range of appropriate monitoring activities, taking good account of the specific needs of pupils, as well as national priorities, such as the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales, and improving Welsh language skills. School leaders, staff and governors carry out a range of useful, shared monitoring activities, including learning walks, scrutiny of pupils' work and listening to learners, which lead to termly reviews of the school's progress. These activities help leaders to recognise

successes, but also to identify refinements that need to be made, as well as further areas that need development. For example, as a result of recent book scrutiny, leaders and staff decided that extended writing should become an additional priority. They also recognise the need to link success criteria more closely to pupil outcomes to make it simpler to evaluate the success of specific actions. This demonstrates the agile approach to school improvement that leaders have cultivated so that the school can respond to the needs of pupils efficiently and effectively. All staff engage in a good range of professional learning that supports school improvement and personal priorities. This has included whole-school training for developing approaches to numeracy across the curriculum, leadership courses for individuals taking on new responsibilities, and working alongside staff from other schools to develop cluster priorities relating to Curriculum for Wales.

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 2023: 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: 06/07/2023