



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

A report on

**Ysgol Pen Barras
Ffordd Glasdir
Ruthin
Denbighshire
LL15 1QQ**

Date of inspection: March 2019

by

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

About Ysgol Pen Barras

Ysgol Pen Barras is situated in Ruthin, Denbighshire. It serves the town of Ruthin and the surrounding area. The current building opened on the new site in April 2018. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work, and English is introduced in key stage 2. There are 273 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including 35 part-time nursery age pupils. They are divided into 11 classes.

Over the last three years, the average proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals has been around 3%. This is significantly lower than the national percentage (19%). Around 76% of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. The school has identified around 15% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, which is slightly lower than the national percentage.

The headteacher was appointed to the post in September 2011, and the school was last inspected in May 2011.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

The headteacher provides robust and very effective leadership for the school, which ensures a clear strategic direction and a culture that promotes Welshness, nurtures respect and encourages pupils and staff to do their best. He is supported highly effectively by the senior management team. One of the school's excellent features is the way in which all members of staff work together exceptionally well.

The school is an extremely friendly and caring community. Nearly all pupils' standards of wellbeing and attitudes to learning are excellent. An exceptional feature of school life is the courtesy and respect with which all pupils treat their peers and adults. There is an enthusiastic learning environment in all classes. Teachers take advantage of regular opportunities to challenge pupils by questioning them skilfully and encouraging them to think. As a result, nearly all pupils make sound and consistent progress, which at least corresponds to what is expected, while over half exceed this progress.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Excellent
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Excellent
Teaching and learning experiences	Excellent
Care, support and guidance	Excellent
Leadership and management	Excellent

Recommendations

R1 Ensure that monitoring reports are evaluative and that they identify clearly the effect of procedures on pupils' standards and wellbeing.

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to how pupils across the school lead planning and the effect that this has on engaging their interest and developing their skills and curiosity towards learning, to be disseminated on Estyn's website

Main findings

Standards: Excellent

During their time at the school, nearly all pupils make sound and consistent progress, which at least corresponds to what is expected, while over half exceed this progress. Nearly all pupils who come from non-Welsh-speaking home acquire very good Welsh communication skills quickly. Pupils with additional learning needs make excellent progress against their targets.

Nearly all pupils have very sound speaking and listening skills. They listen attentively to adults and each other, and respond highly maturely to instructions and questions by using extended and interesting sentences. They are very keen to provide contributions and comments when discussing their tasks. In the foundation phase, most speak very confidently by using a wide range of rich vocabulary in various situations, such as their production of the marriage of Llew and Blodeuwedd. Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 communicate in a highly mature way in Welsh and English, and express their ideas very effectively in a wide range of genres.

Nearly all pupils' reading skills are developing very successfully. By the end of the foundation phase, most read familiar and unfamiliar words fluently and very confidently. Many are beginning to read with appropriate expression and meaning. Most pupils in key stage 2 read intelligently and maturely in both languages. They make very good use of their skills to gather relevant information from books and various texts, and from websites, to enrich their work across the curriculum, for example when preparing weekly news reports and a portrayal of Sir O M Edwards.

One of the school's obvious strengths is the way in which many pupils in the foundation phase and key stage 2 write independently to a high standard for different purposes and in a wide range of subjects and contexts. By the end of the foundation phase, most make very good progress in their proficiency to use varied vocabulary and language to write stories and letters for a purpose. For example, they have written a letter to the First Minister of Wales to thank him for their daily milk and to encourage him to send the milk in bottles so that they will not have to use plastic straws to pollute the environment. In key stage 2, most write complex sentences, develop their ideas sensibly and show a sound grasp of form and sequence, in both Welsh and English. They choose interesting vocabulary, and spell and punctuate correctly. By the time they reach the top of the school, they use adjectives, similes and idioms confidently and naturally to enrich their work, for example when writing a story in the style of Roald Dahl. Most pupils' presentation of work and handwriting are very neat, which shows their pride in their work.

In the foundation phase, nearly all pupils have very sound numeracy skills. By the end of the phase, they have a very sound grasp of number facts to 100. They calculate highly skilfully in their heads when solving challenging problems, for example when searching for the correct key to open a lock. They have a very sound understanding of units of measurement when estimating and measuring the length of flowers and twigs. Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 develop and use a wide range of number skills masterfully, and more able pupils achieve very highly. By the end of key stage 2, they have a very sound understanding of the relationship between numbers and actions in real-life situations, for example when creating a formula to

calculate how many horizontal and vertical posts are needed to build a fence. They use measuring skills very well when calculating the perimeter and area of composite shapes and a circle. They interpret data highly intelligently when calculating the mode, range and average of the number of goals scored in a football tournament. Pupils in both stages use and apply their skills effectively across the areas of learning.

All pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developing very soundly, and they use them completely naturally in their cross-curricular work. In the foundation phase, they use an electronic tablet confidently when writing simple instructions on how to wash clothes during the Victorian era. They control a mechanical toy successfully to avoid beasts on a journey, and create a block graph and pie chart correctly to show how pupils travel to school. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils create and interrogate data effectively to create multimedia presentations, for example when creating an animation of a script that they have written about a farm. Older pupils' coding skills are developing very well as they create simple maze games for pupils in Year 3.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Nearly all pupils' standards of wellbeing and attitudes to learning are excellent. An exceptional feature of the school's work is the courtesy and respect with which all pupils treat their peers and adults. This contributes significantly towards the exceptional and highly effective learning environment within the school. Nearly all pupils enjoy the school's life and work and feel safe there. They are aware of whom to approach when they have concerns and are very confident that staff listen to them. All pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of staying safe online. Nearly all pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily, and take part in physical exercise activities regularly. This has a very positive effect on their personal and social skills, in addition to developing their confidence and fitness successfully.

Nearly all pupils are hard-working and enthusiastic, work together harmoniously and stay diligently on task for extended periods. They respect other people's opinions by listening to their views and waiting patiently for their turn. They have a sound understanding of what they need to do to improve their work and contribute positively towards supporting and improving each other's learning. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their ability to use their independent learning skills are excellent features.

Nearly all pupils take pride in the regular and valuable opportunities they are given to perform in front of audiences. These include school concerts, various services and the Urdd Eisteddfod.

Nearly all pupils' behaviour in the classrooms and as they move around the school is excellent. Older pupils show great care towards the younger pupils, which ensures that they grow to become confident and happy pupils. This contributes to the school's inclusive nature and highly caring ethos. Nearly all pupils show pride when talking about their school and the wider community, and they are very willing to support the local community by performing and taking part in a variety of special occasions. For example, Year 1 and 2 pupils visit residents in a home for the elderly regularly to entertain them.

The pupil's voice is very strong across the school as they take full advantage of extensive opportunities to voice their opinion and influence the school's life and work. A notable example of this is the natural way in which pupils across both stages lead their own learning to match their interests. Pupils decide which themes they would like to learn about, in addition to the main lines of enquiry on which they would like to focus. As a result, nearly all pupils take full ownership of their learning.

Members of the numerous committees, such as the school council, the eco council, digital leaders and the sports ambassadors have an excellent influence on the school's life and work. For example, members of the council have worked successfully with the council of another school that shares the same site to produce timetables for the shared facilities jointly.

Pupils' attendance rates are consistently very high. They have been above the mean in comparison with similar schools over the last five years and in the top quarter for the last two years. This reflects that fact that pupils enjoy attending school.

Teaching and learning experiences: Excellent

Teaching is very effective in all classes. The agreed system of planning learning experiences that address the needs of pupils of all abilities is very effective. A particular feature of planning is the way in which pupils in all departments choose the themes that they would like to learn, and teachers build on their ideas very skilfully. This engages pupils' interest in an excellent way and develops their skills and curiosity towards learning skilfully, and strengthens their commitment to their work highly successfully.

The pace of lessons is a strong feature, and teachers use a rich range of exciting teaching methods to develop pupils' skills highly effectively. There is an enthusiastic learning environment in all classes, and teachers take advantage of every opportunity to challenge pupils by questioning them skilfully and encouraging them to think. They model language of a high standard skilfully and take advantage of valuable opportunities to improve pupils' oral skills. By forging a very effective working relationship with pupils, staff create an extremely supportive and stimulating learning environment, which encourages them to learn continuously.

The school has a natural Welsh ethos, and all staff create a highly positive atmosphere that promotes this successfully and ignites pupils' enthusiasm towards the language. Provision for the Welsh dimension is exciting and imaginative. This is reinforced effectively by providing frequent opportunities for pupils to learn about Welsh art, poetry and literature, and competing in eisteddfodau and attending Welsh language centres, such as the Urdd residential centres in Llangrannog, Glan-llyn and Cardiff. This raises pupils' awareness of their local area and increases their interest in the traditions, culture and history of their local area and the whole of Wales successfully.

Teachers provide rich and varied opportunities for pupils to perform at school and in the local community. These opportunities develop pupils' creative skills very well. They include sports and musical activities, which have led to the pupils' excellent success in eisteddfodau and other competitions.

The principles of the foundation phase have been established firmly. Continuous access to the outdoor area ensures that all pupils benefit from stimulating activities, both indoors and outdoors. Effective focus and continuous activities include beneficial opportunities for pupils to investigate, role-play, build and practice their physical skills. This nurtures positive attitudes to learning and encourages pupils to persevere for extended periods. Key stage 2 teachers build well on this firm foundation by encouraging pupils to apply their skills in challenging tasks. Valuable and sensible opportunities are provided to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum.

Assessment for learning strategies have been established firmly throughout the school. Pupils are given constructive feedback, both orally and in writing, in order for them to understand what they need to do to improve the standard of their work. Increasing opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect on their own learning and the efforts of their peers, and to contribute effectively to the process of setting their own levels of challenge. This element of the school's work is a strength and contributes successfully to pupils' progress and achievement.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school is an extremely friendly and caring community. The care, support and guidance of staff ensure that pupils' wellbeing is exceptionally effective and that they are given excellent opportunities to flourish in terms of their academic, social, moral, emotional and creative development. All members of staff have very high expectations in terms of pupils' behaviour, effort and wellbeing. This is reflected very clearly in the mature and enthusiastic way in which pupils respond to all aspects of the school's life and work.

Collective worship sessions are valuable opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual skills, in addition to their understanding of the wider world and their respectful attitudes towards people from different cultures and backgrounds. The school has robust procedures to promote eating and drinking healthily. As a result, most pupils have a sound understanding of what they need to do to keep fit and healthy. Exercise sessions and sports clubs contribute to this successfully. Various activities to develop pupils' understanding of personal wellbeing ensure that nearly all pupils understand the importance of keeping themselves safe at school, at home, on the road and online. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Staff provide very extensive opportunities for pupils to voice their opinions and influence the school's life and work. As a result, members of all councils are very enthusiastic and understand that they represent the views of other pupils within the school community. Staff encourage pupils to work very closely with them to ensure that the school is a safe, healthy and happy place. They encourage the 'Ciw Clên', for example, to ensure that pupils play happily on the playground. A particular feature of the school's work is the contribution of all pupils in deciding on the themes that they would like to study and the learning pathways that they would like to pursue. This contributes in an excellent way to pupils' enthusiasm to work confidently and independently. This has a strong effect on the high standards that they achieve.

Staff promote Welsh culture, heritage and the Welsh language particularly effectively. They provide valuable opportunities to develop pupils' imaginative experiences by providing interesting art and music lessons and by inviting Welsh poets, actors and artists to promote their understanding of contemporary Welsh art. Staff provide numerous opportunities for pupils to perform at the school, in the local community, to take part in concerts and compete in eisteddfodau and other national competitions. This develops their self-confidence and their pride in themselves and their school very successfully.

The school has highly effective and thorough procedures to track and monitor pupils' progress and wellbeing. This enables staff to identify any pupils who need additional support or challenge quickly. They organise a wide range of varied and rich intervention programmes for them, which engage their interest and aim to meet all of their needs. This ensures caring support for individuals and groups of pupils, and enables them to make sound and consistent progress to attain good standards. The individual education plans of pupils with additional learning needs are concise and clear. Plans are reviewed regularly with pupils and their parents, and are adapted purposefully, where necessary.

There is an excellent relationship between parents and the school. Parents have raised significant amounts of money to buy equipment to improve opportunities for pupils in the outdoor learning and play areas. This has a very positive effect on pupils' social development and wellbeing. They have also bought ICT equipment, which has raised standards significantly in this area of learning.

Leadership and management: Excellent

The headteacher provides very robust and effective leadership for the school, which ensures a clear strategic direction and a culture that promotes Welshness, nurtures respect and encourages pupils and staff to do their best. He has a vision that is based on providing high quality education to ensure that all pupils achieve to the best of their ability. He is supported extremely effectively by the senior management team. One of the school's excellent features is the way in which all members of staff work exceptionally well together. Regular departmental meetings make an excellent contribution to the school's success, ensure that all aspects of the school's work have a positive and clear influence on pupils' achievement and wellbeing, and ensure a homely ethos and a well-organised community.

The school is supported very well by the governors. They have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need to be developed further. The school's rigorous monitoring system ensures that they are knowledgeable about its performance. Their practice of visiting classes helps them to form a clear judgement on the standards of pupils' work and attainment, and enables them to challenge and question staff about the school's performance.

The school's plans for developing staff link directly with the current performance management procedures. They enrich the professional development of all staff very successfully. The school has forged an effective working relationship with other similar schools and has benefitted greatly in areas such as developing the outdoor area for the foundation phase and ICT. This has led to developing the various learning areas extremely well in order to stimulate pupils to become more

independent learners, and to improve pupils' ICT skills significantly across the school.

All members of staff have a sound understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. They use information from rigorous evaluation processes, such as scrutinising books, lesson observations and data analysis to identify priorities for improvement to be included in the school development plan. The school seeks the views of parents and pupils regularly to ensure that all stakeholders are given a prominent opportunity to comment and make suggestions in terms of improving provision and raising standards. There is a good link between the findings of evaluation procedures and the school development plan, which ensures that it is a useful and effective tool. Staff monitor progress carefully and submit rigorous reviews in relation to the school's priorities. This ensures that the school continues to give due attention to improving pupils' standards and wellbeing. Although evaluation procedures are comprehensive, monitoring reports do not always give enough attention to pupils' achievement. There is a tendency for them to be descriptive rather than evaluative.

Expenditure links well with the school's objectives, targets and improvement plans. The headteacher and governors monitor and manage expenditure very carefully and ensure that financial resources are used fully to support priorities for improvement. Effective use of the pupil development plan to support the very few pupils who are eligible for free school meals has led to significant progress in pupils' standards, particularly in improving their reading skills.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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