



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

A report on

**Ysgol Gynradd Bethel
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
LL55 1AX**

Date of inspection: May 2019

by

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

About Ysgol Gynradd Bethel

Ysgol Gynradd Bethel is situated in the centre of the village of Bethel, around three miles east of the town of Caernarfon in Gwynedd local authority. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work. There are 150 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including 27 nursery age pupils. The school has 5 classes, including 4 mixed-age classes.

Over the last three years, around 4% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. This is significantly lower than the national percentage of 18%. Around 90% of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. The school has identified around 15% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, which is lower than the national percentage of 21%.

The school was last inspected in November 2012 and the current headteacher was appointed to the post in September 2018.

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

During their time at the school, nearly all pupils make very strong progress and apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills highly successfully in a range of different creative and integrated activities.

Nearly all pupils' standards of wellbeing, behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. The strength of working relationships between pupils and staff are an excellent feature of the school's work. Respect and courtesy are valued between pupils, and between children and adults, within a caring, supportive and Welsh environment.

Teachers provide a stimulating and rich practical curriculum for pupils, which engages nearly all pupils' interest very successfully. Pupils are given a prominent voice in guiding their learning. Staff's commitment to introducing strategies that raise pupils' confidence and develop their resilience contributes highly effectively towards ensuring that they show high levels of motivation, interest and pride in their work. Pupils develop as ambitious, confident and independent learners.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide highly effective leadership and a clear strategic direction for the school's work. A culture of improvement permeates the school, and continuous review and planning for improvement are at the heart of its ethos. An excellent feature is the way in which responsibilities are distributed highly effectively. This leads to a strong learning environment.

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 Improve pupils' English spelling skills in key stage 2
- R2 Create opportunities for teachers to work with teachers from other schools to investigate and evaluate the effect of their efforts to establish the new curriculum on pupils' outcomes

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 strategic planning to introduce a number of innovative strategies to promote pupils' appetite and enthusiasm for learning, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Excellent

During their time at the school, nearly all pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make very strong progress in their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Nearly all pupils apply these skills very confidently and successfully in a range of different creative and integrated activities.

Early years pupils listen carefully and express an opinion maturely when discussing their activities. By Year 2, nearly all pupils speak enthusiastically in a range of contexts, for example when discussing different insects. Across key stage 2, nearly all pupils contribute effectively to group discussions and express their ideas, views and feelings eloquently in extended sentences, for example when discussing the effect of plastic waste on the ocean. A strong and consistent feature of the school's work is the way in which pupils use polished language naturally and spontaneously. During their time at the school, most attain a high standard of bilingualism, and switch freely from one language to the other.

Most pupils' reading skills are developing very well across the school. Most develop early reading skills at an early stage and gain confidence while enjoying rich activities. They have sound phonic skills when reading unfamiliar words. By Year 2, most pupils are skilful readers. Most pupils in key stage 2 read intelligently and maturely in both languages. They use their skills highly effectively to gather information from various books and texts, and from appropriate websites, for example to enrich their work across the curriculum when comparing the lives of people during the age of the Celts with the lives of people in ancient Egypt.

Most foundation phase pupils develop their writing skills highly effectively. From the outset, they write letters, phrases and simple words, and gain confidence quickly. By Year 2, most write independently and develop as creative and skilful writers. Across key stage 2, most pupils write maturely in a wide range of contexts. By Year 6, most produce work of a high standard, for example when writing a newspaper article about the mystery of the bag. They use mature vocabulary in their writing, and use effects and similes very successfully to enrich their work. They show a sound grasp of spelling patterns, paragraphing and punctuation in Welsh. However, too many common spelling errors are a feature of a minority of pupils' work in English.

Across the school, most pupils have a very sound grasp of number facts, shape and data, and use these skills confidently when solving problems. A strong feature is the way in which all pupils respond to mental mathematics challenges at the beginning of lessons, and show a sound grasp of what they have learnt previously. Nearly all pupils handle numbers quickly and correctly, and use a variety of strategies confidently to calculate various problems. Most pupils in the foundation phase show excellent progress when using their measuring skills proficiently across the areas of learning, for example when creating models of different-sized insects in the art area. In key stage 2, nearly all pupils' numeracy skills are extremely sound, and more able pupils achieve very highly. An excellent feature is their ability to transfer their skills very skilfully to a variety of contexts to support their work across the curriculum, for example when creating a fact file about rare animals.

Across the school, pupils use the full range of ICT skills very effectively to support their work in areas of learning and across the curriculum. An excellent feature of their work is their skilful and capable use of a wide variety of programs to create interesting and creative films to a very high standard. Nearly all foundation phase pupils use a range of programs very confidently, which enriches their learning effectively. They use electronic tablets highly effectively to record their work and develop their oral skills. Nearly all pupils in key stage 2 make mature choices about which equipment to use to complete specific tasks. They apply their ICT skills to a high standard across the curriculum, for example when creating multimedia presentations of their work to share with other members of the class. By Year 6, nearly all pupils use the internet very successfully to search for information, for example about the habitats of rare animals. They create and use databases and spreadsheets intelligently when trying to raise money to adopt a panda in China.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Nearly all pupils' standards of wellbeing and attitudes to learning are excellent. Nearly all pupils' standards of behaviour and self-discipline in lessons, and around the school, are exceptionally good. They feel safe at school, attend regularly and are confident that staff respond to any concerns they may have promptly. Nearly all pupils are extremely polite towards their peers, staff and visitors. Positive interaction and strong levels of co-operation between pupils of all ages, during work and play, are a strong feature of the school. They are exceptionally caring towards each other and treat others with great respect in lessons, in the dining hall and on the school playground. An excellent example of this is the mature way in which older pupils, who are members of the 'Criw Clên', care for others during break times and lunchtime.

Nearly all pupils show great pride in their school, their community and their Welshness. They take pride in the Welsh language and use it naturally when talking to each other. They speak confidently about their school and community, and take pride in their bilingualism, culture and Welsh heritage. Nearly all pupils contribute extensively to the community, for example by supporting the local eisteddfod. This has a positive effect on their understanding of their culture, in addition to developing a sense of pride in their community.

By using a variety of effective strategies, nearly all pupils have some of the skills that are essential for learning effectively, and show willingness to embrace new experiences immediately. Nearly all pupils are ready to start activities enthusiastically, concentrate well, work together in harmony and stay diligently on task for extended periods. They enjoy being challenged and work well independently, and show a high level of perseverance. An excellent example of this is the way in which pupils use the learning powers and 'dyffryn dysgu' (learning valley) naturally when discussing how making mistakes is an integral part of their learning. As a result, nearly all pupils show high levels of motivation, interest and pride in their work and develop as ambitious, confident and independent learners.

One of the school's strengths is the mature way in which nearly all pupils express their views about what they would like to learn, which includes choosing themes. By contributing towards planning practical themes in areas across the curriculum, pupils apply themselves very successfully to their learning. They often choose the level of

challenge that they pursue in specific tasks and explain the reasons for doing so. Nearly all pupils respond very positively to the constructive feedback that they are given by teachers. From an early age, most have a very good understanding of their personal ability and how they can develop and improve their work further. By Year 6, most pupils show particular maturity when evaluating what they have achieved and identifying what they need to do to improve their work.

Across the school, many pupils undertake their leadership roles and responsibilities conscientiously as members of the school council, green school, healthy school and digital wizards. They shoulder responsibilities maturely and understand that they give their peers a prominent voice and enable them to have a positive effect on school life and the wellbeing of their peers. They take pride in what they achieve to improve the school. An excellent feature is the school council's mature contribution when presenting information about bullying in an assembly. The 'arwyr ar-lein' ('online heroes') are active in reminding their peers about the rules of the internet. As a result, nearly all pupils have a sound awareness of the importance of staying safe on the internet.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of making sensible choices about eating and drinking healthily. All pupils understand that regular exercise has a positive effect on their fitness, health and physical wellbeing. An excellent example of this is the energetic exercise sessions first thing in the morning, at the request of the sports ambassadors, in addition to a short mindfulness session to calm down. As a result, nearly all pupils are ready to start their morning activities enthusiastically and concentrate well. Older pupils are aware that attending after-school sports clubs has a positive effect on their skills, fitness and ability to co-operate.

Teaching and learning experiences: Excellent

Staff work together very effectively, and the excellent relationship between adults and pupils has a very positive effect on pupils' standards and wellbeing. There is a positive and supportive learning environment in all classes, where teachers motivate and manage pupils' behaviour very successfully. Teachers use a variety of techniques skilfully to ensure the willing involvement of nearly all pupils. This leads to very effective co-operation and develops pupils' enthusiasm and appetite for learning.

Teachers provide a range of practical, stimulating and rich experiences for pupils, which meet nearly all pupils' needs successfully. They provide interesting and imaginative cross-curricular themes and work programmes, which expand their knowledge and understanding, and strengthen their commitment to their work very effectively. Pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are developed naturally as an integral part of planning. As a result, most pupils transfer and apply their skills very confidently to all areas of learning. The principles of the foundation phase have been established extremely well at the school. A range of imaginative and challenging activities is used, which nurture pupils' independence effectively. As a result, pupils have the confidence to take risks and think for themselves from a very young age. Staff have recently developed the outdoor area highly skilfully in order to develop pupils' skills further. They use this area flexibly to provide stimulating activities that provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply their skills. While adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of the new curriculum for Wales, key stage 2 teachers

provide a wide range of very practical and creative learning experiences, for example when challenging pupils to try to solve the mystery of the bag. They ensure increasing and valuable opportunities for pupils to make important decisions in relation to their work. This has a very positive effect on their attitudes to learning.

There is a very strong Welsh ethos, and provision encourages pupils to make full use of the Welsh language in all aspects of school life. All members of staff are robust language models and encourage pupils to use the Welsh language regularly and naturally during their activities. As a result, nearly all pupils discuss their work confidently and use rich and polished vocabulary. There is a clear emphasis on developing a curriculum that is based on Wales and Welsh heritage. This contributes successfully to the pupils' understanding of their local area, history and culture.

Teachers have good, up-to-date subject knowledge and use this information skilfully to plan interesting lessons and rich learning experiences for pupils. They use a variety of effective teaching methods and link their lessons skilfully with previous learning. They explain new concepts clearly to pupils, and provide tasks that have been tailored skilfully for the full range of ability within the classes. This engages pupils' interest and enthusiasm in their learning, and ensures that they apply themselves fully to their work. In a majority of classes in which teaching is at its best, imaginative presentations and the pace of lessons are strong features of teaching. In these classes, teachers have very high expectations and challenge nearly all pupils' very effectively. They question skilfully to expand pupils' knowledge and understanding in order to challenge them to think and reason their answers at a higher level. As a result, pupils have the confidence to take risks, and undertake tasks enthusiastically and independently.

Assessment for learning strategies have been embedded very effectively and have a very positive effect on nearly all pupils' learning and progress. Teachers provide pupils with robust feedback in order for them to make improvements and develop their work further. Pupils are given regular opportunities to reflect on their work and make improvements. Teachers intervene sensitively to support pupils at appropriate times during lessons, for example to encourage them to check their progress against lesson objectives and their personal targets, and to use the working wall as a tool to improve their work. As a result, by Year 6, nearly all pupils have very good knowledge of their development as learners, take responsibility for their work and progress, and are able to discuss this confidently.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The quality of care and guidance that is provided by the school is exceptionally high. The school is an extremely happy, hardworking and inclusive community, which promotes the importance of respect and courtesy consistently. This contributes very effectively towards pupils' positive attitudes to their work and the school's inclusive ethos. The strength of the working relationships between pupils and staff is an excellent feature of the school's work, and contributes extensively to the effective learning environment. All staff have very high expectations in terms of pupils' behaviour, effort and wellbeing. This can be seen in pupils' excellent behaviour and the way that they treat each other.

Staff's commitment to introducing strategies that raise pupils' confidence and develop their resilience contributes highly effectively towards ensuring that pupils show high levels of motivation, interest and pride in their work. All teachers make very consistent and effective use of strategies, such as the learning powers and the 'dyffryn dysgu' (learning valley) to encourage pupils to persevere. This nurtures independent learners who enjoy opportunities to reflect on their work, explain how it can be improved and aim to achieve to the best of their ability. Staff take the pupil's voice seriously, which contributes very effectively to opportunities for them to shoulder responsibilities and make decisions that have a very positive effect on their learning.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development very successfully. Provision to develop pupils' creative and expressive skills is an excellent feature. An exceptional feature of provision is the way in which teachers encourage pupils to use their imagination and ICT skills when engaging with the creative arts. Imaginative use of electronic tablets contributes significantly to this, for example as pupils create dramatic presentations of a high standard about a hungry spider eating birds. The school supports the local eisteddfod regularly, in addition to presenting concerts and Christmas shows. This provides valuable opportunities for pupils to perform and contribute to activities in their local community.

The school has highly effective and thorough procedures to track and monitor pupils' progress and wellbeing. This helps staff to identify any pupils who need support or additional challenge quickly. Teachers respond intelligently to individuals' needs to ensure that nearly all achieve to the best of their ability. They organise a wide range of rich and varied intervention programmes for them, which engage their interest and aim to meet all pupils' needs. This ensures caring support for individuals and groups of pupils, which enables them to make sound and consistent progress. Strategies to improve the wellbeing and raise the self-confidence of vulnerable pupils is a very strong feature of the school's work, and outcomes show the effectiveness of these. The individual education plans of pupils with additional learning needs are concise and clear. These plans are reviewed regularly with pupils and their parents, and are adapted purposefully where necessary. The school works closely with various agencies in order to provide valuable support for pupils and their parents.

The school establishes productive relationships with parents. Parents are very appreciative of the way in which the school shares information about its activities and events. An effective example of this is the way in which the school organises numeracy workshops, so that parents are more aware of what they can do to support their children's learning at home. As a result, parents have valuable involvement in their children's education, and this has a positive effect on their progress. Parents and the community contribute significant funding, for example by providing exciting equipment for the foundation phase outdoor area and purchasing ICT resources, which enable the school to implement the digital competence framework.

The school has appropriate procedures to promote eating and drinking healthily. As a result, nearly all pupils understand the importance of making sensible choices about eating and drinking healthily. A wide variety of extra-curricular activities and clubs is organised, which contributes successfully towards developing pupils' wellbeing and fitness. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Excellent

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide innovative and robust leadership, and set a clear strategic direction for developing the school. They have very high expectations and both are very passionate about the community that they serve. They are highly effective in setting and promoting a vision for the school, which is based on 'Breuddwydio – Credu – Llwyddo' ('Dream – Believe – Succeed') and focuses on happiness and wellbeing, and ensuring stimulating experiences for pupils in a nurturing and supportive Welsh environment. They share this vision very successfully with all staff, pupils, parents and governors, which leads successfully to high expectations of clear educational values and ambitious objectives for all pupils.

An excellent feature of the school's work is the way in which the headteacher distributes responsibilities highly effectively and purposefully between staff. This is a core part of his strategy and as an effective means of developing staff, promoting successful co-operation and sharing good practice. Staff roles and responsibilities have been defined clearly, and there are clear communication procedures between all staff. This promotes high quality teamwork. All teachers respond very enthusiastically when developing areas and aspects of learning in order to raise pupils' standards. A highly effective example of this is the way in which all teachers implement wellbeing and mindfulness strategies. This ensures that nearly all pupils have the essential skills that they need to enable them to learn effectively and show willingness to engage with new experiences.

The willingness of the headteacher and all staff to achieve national and local priorities, and face changes and current developments in education confidently and creatively, is an excellent feature. Teachers work together highly effectively to adapt provision to establish the new curriculum for Wales, by producing a creative, practical and stimulating curriculum that engages nearly all pupils' interest and ignites their imagination. However, it is too early to measure the effect of this on pupils' outcomes. Agreed teaching strategies have been established across the school, with a prominent emphasis on ensuring that pupils play an active part in their own learning. As a result, nearly all pupils are keen to complete tasks to a high level, take pride in their work and take ownership of it. Staff's enthusiasm in establishing the digital competence framework and promoting the Welsh language across the school also leads highly successfully to high standards among pupils.

The school has a strong culture of continuous review and planning for improvement. Self-evaluation arrangements are very rigorous and successful, and enable leaders to monitor the school's performance effectively. First-hand evidence from a wide range of sources contributes effectively to the process, and includes the views and opinion of pupils and parents. This ensures a successful climate of targeting and challenging pupils to achieve to the best of their ability and make continuous and achievable improvements. Staff have strong ownership of the process of ensuring improvement, and they evaluate progress carefully and present rigorous reviews regularly. This ensures that the school continues to improve year on year. A very good example of this is the obvious improvement in the development of pupils' spoken and written language over time.

The school has robust performance management arrangements, and successful training opportunities derive from this to promote staff's professional development.

This has led to a strong teaching community in which staff learn and develop together very effectively. Joint training with local schools adds well to staff's professional learning. A highly effective example of this is teachers' dedication when introducing agreed assessment for learning strategies, in order to ensure that pupils receive more effective feedback about their work.

The governing body is dedicated and supportive of the school. By visiting the school and playing a prominent part in its monitoring, self-evaluation and strategic planning procedures, members of the governing body have rigorous knowledge of its performance. This, in addition to receiving purposeful reports from the headteacher, staff and pupils, leads to a rigorous understanding of the strengths of provision and areas for improvement. This enables them to hold the school to account and helps to set a clear strategic direction to develop the school as a very effective learning community. They allocate funding appropriately in order to meet the priorities for improvement, for example by ensuring that the school has purposeful resources, such as ICT equipment, which succeeds in extending valuable opportunities for teaching and learning. The school uses a range of grants purposefully, including the pupil development grant, to enrich provision.

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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