



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

A report on

**Ysgol O.M. Edwards
Llanuwchllyn
Bala
Gwynedd
LL23 7UB**

Date of inspection: January 2018

by

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

About Ysgol O.M. Edwards

Ysgol Gynradd O.M. Edwards is a Welsh-medium community school that serves the village of Llanuwchllyn and the surrounding area. There are 109 pupils on roll. Children are admitted to the school during the September before their fourth birthday and finish when they are eleven years old. There are four classes, two for foundation phase children and two for key stage 2 pupils.

Welsh is the main medium of the school's education and work. The Welsh language is used as a teaching medium in the foundation phase, and English is introduced gradually to children from Year 1 onwards, when it is appropriate for the individual. All children are taught through the medium of Welsh and English from seven years old onwards, with the aim of pupils being fully bilingual by the time they transfer to secondary school. Ninety per cent (90%) of pupils comes from Welsh-speaking homes. Very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Seven point six per cent (7.6%) of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is significantly lower than the national average. Eleven per cent (11%) of pupils have been identified by the school as having additional learning needs, which is significantly lower than the national average. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

The school is a pioneer school in developing literacy and communication, and is working with the Welsh Government to develop a new curriculum for 2020. The school is also working with the Welsh Government on continuous professional development and is looking closely at the new standards, leading to training meetings in this area. It is also a lead creative school that is working with creative practitioners, and a pioneer school in information and communication technology (ICT).

The school has four full-time teachers and the current headteacher has led the school since 2009. The school was last inspected in May 2012.

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 school is situated in a naturally Welsh area, and all of the school's life and work prides itself on its Welshness and promotes pupils' pride in it. Pupils' respect towards each other is evident and, as a result, behaviour and wellbeing are excellent elements. The school provides a wide range of valuable experiences that succeed in stimulating pupils' enthusiasm towards their work. They use the local community successfully in order to elicit pride and understanding of the local area. The school is very willing to take a risk and keen to trial innovative planning methods that focus strongly on listening to the pupil's voice. The staff's enthusiasm in recent projects is infectious and their enjoyment in pursuing pupils' ideas has succeeded in creating pieces of ICT and design and technology work at a very high level.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the attainment of more able pupils in mathematics by the end of key stage 2
- R2 Develop the independence of pupils in key stage 2
- R3 Use assessment processes formatively in order to meet the needs of all pupils
- R4 Develop the role of staff in the self-evaluation process

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 using the community creatively to provide rich experiences that promote the Cwricwlwm Cymreig, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

On entry to the school, most pupils have very high communication skills as they come from Welsh-speaking homes. Most pupils' mathematics skills on entry to the school are also higher than expected. By the end of Year 6, they make good progress across all areas of the curriculum. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress towards their targets from their starting points.

One of the school's strengths is the way in which nearly all pupils communicate to a high standard in Welsh. Nearly all pupils have excellent oracy skills, and this ensures comprehensive access to the curriculum. On entry to the school, most pupils use very mature language patterns and speak Welsh with their peers completely naturally from the outset. Pupils who do not speak Welsh as a first language on entry are immersed fully in the language and learn to communicate through the medium of Welsh at a very early stage. Nearly all pupils' listening skills in the foundation phase are good, and they arrive at school in the morning ready to learn. They discuss their work confidently by using rich vocabulary. Across key stage 2, most show genuine respect when listening to the views of others. They speak maturely in Welsh and succeed in adapting their language appropriately for different audiences. For example, they are able to create a script for a weather forecast spontaneously, present it immediately, and have the relevant understanding of language to colour their performance while being filmed in front of the green screen.

Most pupils come to recognise letters and build words soon after starting at the school. By Year 2, most are able to use their reading skills to interpret text very well and use their skills across the curriculum successfully. For example, when searching for information about the Stone Age on the internet, they find information and read it knowledgeably. By the end of key stage 2, most read Welsh novels fluently. They are able to discuss the content of novels well, and compare those that were written by Welsh authors, such as T Llew Jones, with translations of novels by Jacqueline Wilson. Many pupils develop translanguaging skills of a high standard by reading and handling information.

Most pupils develop very good writing skills. In the foundation phase, a few pupils have excellent writing skills on entry to the school, and they are able to write simple sentences with a good element of accuracy. By the end of the phase, most pupils write at length and use elementary punctuation and conjunctions correctly. They show a good awareness of spelling strategies to build more complex words. Most pupils in key stage 2 are developing very well in their writing skills. By the end of the stage, many pupils' writing skills are excellent. They write at length for many purposes and use powerful words to create effect. For example, when writing a monologue of a child in a Tsunami, one pupil wrote that 'the sea's claws are tearing me', and another said that they felt 'like paper in a hurricane'. Many pupils write extended pieces in English to a level that is appropriate for their age and ability, for example a report about Thomas Telford. However, their communication, reading and speaking skills have not been developed to the same level in English.

Nearly all pupils develop their number skills successfully in the foundation phase. Most pupils' number skills in Year 2 are good, and a few are excellent. More able pupils show a sound understanding of number value and add numbers in fours, sixes and eights confidently up to 40. In key stage 2, most pupils succeed in developing their skills appropriately. They acquire a sound understanding of the four rules, fractions, percentages and place value. However, the mathematical skills of pupils of higher ability have not been developed as well as they could.

Pupils' standards of ICT are very high across the school. From the time they enter the school, pupils show complete confidence when using a variety of ICT equipment to support them with their activities. There is obvious progress as pupils grow older. In key stage 2, pupils use ICT to find information about their themes and when presenting their work. They are confident in all aspects of the ICT curriculum. They are able to use HWB to create a playlist that includes Welsh music, create spreadsheets, a database, and communicate with their friends by e-mail. They use appropriate programs to input a series of instructions in order to create a simple program. The use that is made of ICT, and pupils' understanding when using it, is a very strong feature of the school's work.

Innovative provision for pupils across the schools means that most pupils make good progress in their skills, including their numeracy and literacy skills. Pupils in the foundation phase use their enterprise skills successfully to create the 'POP' magazine, and write interesting articles about characters in their community, a recipe for bird food, create competitions and humorous jokes. They use the profit to buy chickens to help residents following the disaster in Nepal. Pupils in key stage 2 apply their problem-solving, communication, numeracy and ICT skills very well by working on projects that relate to everyday experiences. A good example of this is the recent work by pupils in Years 5 and 6 on their theme, 'Bridges'.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

An exceptionally good feature of the school is the respect and courtesy that nearly all pupils show towards each other, adults and visitors. Their communication and social skills are excellent, and are a significant strength among pupils across the school. Nearly all pupils enjoying coming to school and show obvious willingness and enthusiasm towards learning. They treat adults with respect and are tolerant of the needs of others. Pupils feel safe from any physical and verbal abuse, and aware of whom to approach if they have any concerns. Nearly all pupils show pride towards the school and take responsibility for promoting and supporting the wellbeing of their peers. A good example of this is the 'Ffrindiau Ffeind' scheme, where Year 6 pupils are partnered with pupils across the school in order to promote the sense of belonging to one big family.

Nearly all pupils' behaviour is of a very high standard. They behave excellently in lessons and while moving around the school. Their willingness to work individually, in pairs and in groups is very good. Nearly all pupils listen attentively to their peers, and their contribution to class discussions is valued. As a result of implementing growth mindset strategies, most pupils are aware of the importance of perseverance and solving problems with peers as tools to complete tasks. By planning themes practically across the curriculum, nearly all pupils are committed and motivated successfully to complete their tasks, and show an interest towards all class work. Pupils' vibrant enthusiasm towards a recent project on bridges is infectious.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of making healthy choices when choosing a snack and the contents of packed lunches. They are aware of the importance of keeping fit and understand how exercise plays a key part in keeping healthy, alongside a balanced diet. Attending the leisure centre for swimming, in addition to rugby lessons with a member of staff from the secondary school, is a weekly highlight for the school's older pupils.

The pupil's voice has a significant influence on the experiences that are provided. Representatives of the school council take their roles seriously, and advertise and organise fundraising activities confidently and independently, for example a charity coffee morning, supporting children in a school in Nepal, and buying equipment for playtime. They discuss the council's priorities confidently and implement them fully independently. The passion of members of the Welsh language charter council towards the Welsh language, their area and their heritage, is a key strength of the school. Under the guidance of the eco council, most pupils have a good understanding of sustainability, and this is disseminated among the community through local litter-picking campaigns.

The school's attendance percentage is consistently above the national targets and has placed the school in the top 25% over a period of four years.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The quality of teaching is consistently good with elements of excellence. When teaching is at its best, teachers succeed in igniting nearly all pupils' curiosity by using an innovative and creative planning method. They work with pupils to plan projects that are based on real-life experiences. This method of planning sparks infectious enthusiasm among the school's pupils and staff towards their work. Innovative activities enable pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding highly successfully across the curriculum, for example by working with a scheme to promote science, technology, electronics and mathematics (known as STEM) to plan interesting activities in order to discover the effect of extreme weather across the world. This work leads to pupils writing a very powerful monologue about a child who is lost in a tsunami.

A very good feature of teaching is the lovely working relationship between pupils, teachers and learning assistants. This reflects the respect and commitment towards working together for the benefit of pupils.

The Welsh language and Welshness are promoted naturally, and pupils, staff, parents and the community take pride in the robustness of the Welsh language and culture. The school takes advantage of this and makes inventive use of the local community to develop pupils' thinking and problem-solving skills. For example, older members of the community are invited to discuss local history and legends as a basis for the term's theme work.

In the foundation phase, teachers plan skilfully in order to develop pupils' creative skills. They prepare a wide range of experiences that are based on the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales, which encourage pupils to be independent, confident and curious learners. There is a good balance between tasks that are led by adults and those that are initiated by pupils.

In key stage 2, teachers listen to the pupil's voice and plan innovative experiences that ignite curiosity and stimulate a high level of perseverance. For example, by completing a project on 'bridges', pupils developed a sound understanding of the properties of materials for building bridges, and took advantage of an opportunity to visit the Menai bridge in order to develop a better understanding of structural engineering. As a result of this work, pupils were encouraged to look at the role of females in the building world, and they developed their understanding of equality in the world of work.

Teachers place a clear emphasis on fostering pupils' independence from an early age by encouraging them to explore, experiment and make independent decisions about what they would like to learn. Foundation phase provision, which enables pupils to apply their key skills in activities in the continuous and enhanced areas, is an exceptional feature. However, there are very few opportunities for pupils to develop further their ability to work independently in key stage 2.

The school makes exceptionally effective use of a wide range of digital programs that stimulate nearly all pupils to learn in a contemporary way. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 use geographical computer programs to observe weather across Wales, Britain, Europe and the world. This enables pupils to weave a range of communication, numeracy and technological skills into their work completely naturally.

Teachers use timely oral feedback that enables pupils to develop their learning successfully. Teachers model rich spoken language, and this is reflected clearly in pupils' written work. Pupils respond to success criteria that are set by the teacher and use these when offering comments to their peers on ways to improve their work. Teachers' concise and purposeful written comments support pupils' learning effectively. When pupils are given an opportunity to respond to teachers' comments, they succeed in improving key parts of their work and complete written pieces of a very good standard. However, this practice is not consistent.

In the foundation phase, teachers assess regularly and analyse outcomes effectively in order to inform their weekly plans, which are manageable and sustainable. In key stage 2, teachers develop assessment methods that weave into their work as a pioneer school. However, teachers do not have a clear record of all pupils' attainment and they do not plan purposefully to meet the needs of specific groups of pupils.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school's ethos and environment celebrate the culture of the local area successfully. Displays stimulate the sense of belonging to a wider community of Welshness. Pupils take great pride in the school's history and origin. O.M. Edwards' eminence survives through the character 'Archarwr Owen' (Owen the Superhero), who promotes the growth mindset of pupils across the school. Legends such as the 'legend of Gwion Bach' are alive in pupils' activities in the foundation phase, as they create a river in order for him to reach the lake.

The school plans activities that use the local area as a prompt, for example by building a bridge to reach the Glan-Ilyn activity centre, watching an archaeologist

excavating at the top of Carn Dochau, working with the Llanuwchllyn narrow gauge railway and discussing the new project for a train go into Bala town centre. This develops a very good understanding of their culture and local community.

The school has very close links with a school in Nepal. Pupils learn about the country's religion and culture, and contact through letters and sending e-mails. The recent disaster in Nepal had a profound effect on pupils, and they were spurred to raise money in order to buy chickens as a donation to the country's residents.

Extra-curricular activities enrich pupils' educational experiences in a very distinct way. They compete successfully in the Urdd, are given good opportunities to perform publicly, both locally and nationally, and develop to become confident citizens. This complements the school's vision well. Pupils are given regular opportunities to attend the Glan-llyn outdoor activity centre, and this develops their pride in their local area.

The school's staff know the pupils and their families well. As a result, there is a robust partnership between the school and the home, which supports the school's values successfully. This extends the care and support for pupils well.

The school has effective procedures to encourage pupils to eat and drink healthily.

The school provides good opportunities for pupils to shoulder responsibilities through the work of the school council, the eco council, digital leaders and the Welsh language charter. Pupils are given an equal opportunity to take part in all of the school's activities.

There are excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their creative skills. An artist visits the school each week to work with foundation phase pupils. As part of the 'creative schools scheme', a composer and playwright visit the school to conduct activities to increase the confidence of pupils in Years 1 and 2.

The school has suitable assessment procedures for tracking pupils' progress across the school. Teachers assess each term and analyse data to identify, in general, the areas for improvement. For example, they have a sound overview of the curricular areas that have been delivered and the areas that need to be delivered. However, the use of assessment findings in order to plan for specific groups of pupils is inconsistent. There is little evidence that leaders evaluate the effect of provision on individual pupils' progress.

Teachers work with schools in the cluster to moderate pupils' work at the end of key stage 2 in order to ensure the quality of their judgements on attainment and achievement. Teachers use this information appropriately in order to plan classroom activities.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. By working in partnership with the local police officer, the school provides effective activities to develop pupils' knowledge of how to keep themselves safe in different situations. The school's arrangements for developing pupils' understanding of how to stay safe on the internet are excellent.

The quality of provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good. Teachers identify pupils' needs at an early stage and intervene, where necessary. Teachers provide comprehensive individual education plans. They include achievable targets that are reviewed regularly jointly with pupils and parents. The school works closely with parents and external agencies to review the progress of these pupils. As a result, the school ensures that most pupils make good progress against their targets.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher sets a clear and purposeful direction that is based on ensuring that the school is up-to-date and uses innovative teaching methods. The headteacher is supported effectively by the deputy. Staff responsibilities are shared appropriately, and they work well together to ensure that pupils receive excellent experiences that inspire them to nurture enthusiasm towards their education.

The school is very willing to take a risk, and teachers are keen to develop and promote further improvements while undertaking their role as a pioneer school and also as a lead creative school. As a result of these projects, elements of the community come together. For example, in partnership with the local community, they work on implementing cross-curricular projects and use local businesses, musicians and artists as stimuli to promote pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

The governing body is dedicated and very supportive of the school. Members of the governing body visit the school regularly and undertake learning walks each term, talk to pupils and scrutinise books. As a result, they have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They use this information successfully to support and challenge the school purposefully, for example by identifying the need to ensure consistency in provision during the staff's frequent absences as they undertake their work as a pioneer school.

The headteacher has created a culture and ethos that support the staff's professional development successfully. She ensures that there are valuable opportunities for them to develop their practices by sharing good practice within the school and with local schools. For example, teachers work with local schools to develop strategies to promote pupils' learning skills. As a result, pupils in the foundation phase undertake tasks very independently, both indoors and outdoors. Being part of the network of curriculum pioneer schools also provides successful opportunities for teachers to extend their professional development, by working with schools across Wales to plan and experiment to create imaginative and stimulating learning experiences.

The headteacher has established purposeful self-evaluation arrangements, which use a range of suitable evidence, including analysing pupils' performance data, scrutinising their work and observing lessons. There are very few opportunities for teachers to play a part in the self-evaluation process, and the use of pupils' and parents' views is inconsistent.

The self-evaluation report, which was prepared before the inspection, provides a clear judgement on standards, wellbeing and attitudes towards learning. However, it does not identify clearly enough some important areas for improvement in terms of provision and standards. For example, there is no reference to improving the attainment of more able pupils in mathematics by the end of key stage 2. There is an

appropriate link between the self-evaluation report and the school improvement plan. The plan focuses appropriately on improving provision, raising standards and responding to national priorities.

Expenditure links appropriately with the priorities in the improvement plan, and funding is monitored carefully in order to ensure that it is used efficiently. Recent investment in new ICT equipment ensures that pupils are given excellent opportunities to apply their skills across the areas of learning. The school uses the pupil development grant purposefully to raise the standards of the very few pupils who are eligible to receive it. As a result, nearly all attain the expected outcome or level.

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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