



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

**A report on**

**Ysgol Dolafon**

**Ysgol Dolafon  
Dol-y-Coed Road  
Llanwrtyd Wells  
Powys  
Powys  
LD5 4RA**

**Date of inspection: November 2024**

**by**

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

## About Ysgol Dolafon

Name of provider	Ysgol Dolafon
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	52
Pupils of statutory school age	46
Number in nursery classes	
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 22.9%)	10.9%
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 11.1%)	28.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	10.9%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2024
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/02/2017
Start date of inspection	04/11/2024

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website:  
[mylocalschool.gov.wales](https://mylocalschool.gov.wales)

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

## Summary

The recently appointed executive headteacher provides effective, compassionate leadership and knows the pupils, staff and families well. He is motivated to succeed for the benefit of pupils and the school's community. He has a clear vision to create a safe, happy and inclusive learning environment where the whole school community develops as 'One Big Family.'

All staff have effective working relationship with pupils which nurtures their well-being effectively. Pupils treat each other, staff and visitors with politeness and respect and, generally, they show appropriate attitudes to learning. Across the school, pupils' behaviour is good, and they feel proud of their school and its community.

Overall, many pupils make at least suitable progress that is in their learning. Many pupils have positive attitudes to Welsh and many make appropriate progress in learning the language. The wide range of pupil voice groups enables many pupils to become involved in discussions and decision-making.

Leaders and staff are beginning to develop a curriculum in line with the principles of Curriculum for Wales, but this is at an early stage of development. As pupils move through the school, they develop good speaking and digital skills. However, teachers do not always ensure that pupils develop a full range of literacy and mathematical skills systematically and progressively, particularly in reading and writing, over time.

The quality of teaching and teachers' feedback is inconsistent. Where teaching is most effective, teachers provide learning experiences for pupils that engage their interests suitably. However, teachers do not always use assessment information well enough to plan learning experiences to develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Consequently, they do not always provide the correct level of challenge to develop pupils as independent learners. In addition, teachers do not always provide pupils with enough meaningful opportunities to improve their learning.

The executive headteacher has identified many of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and is beginning to bring about improvements. However, it is too early to see the positive impact of these improvements. Governors are valuable members of the school community and offer appropriate support and challenge to the school. Leaders undertake a suitable and clear program of activities to monitor and evaluate the school's work. However, leadership processes across the school are not yet embedded well enough. In general, evaluations of monitoring activity do not always ensure that all important areas for improvement are identified in a timely and effective way.

## Recommendations

We have made four recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Strengthen leadership at all levels to use self-evaluation processes effectively to recognise and realise the school's priorities for improvement
- R2 Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistent, and that staff make purposeful use of assessment information to plan provision to challenge and support pupils' progress
- R3 Provide an engaging and purposeful curriculum that develops pupils' independence, mathematical and literacy skills progressively over time
- R4 Ensure consistency in the quality and use of pupil feedback to support and provide pupils with meaningful opportunities to respond and improve their work

## What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress about 12 months after the publication of this report.

## Main evaluation

In the relatively short time since his appointment, the executive headteacher has demonstrated sensitive, considerate and effective leadership. Following a period of turbulence in leadership and staffing, he has quickly established positive working relationships with pupils, parents, staff and governors. Together, they communicate a vision for the school of 'One Big Family', that has the well-being of pupils and staff at its heart.

The school is a caring learning community where staff encourage pupils to embrace its supportive and friendly ethos effectively. All staff provide and maintain a strong safeguarding culture and nurture warm, trusting, and respectful working relationships with pupils. As a result, there is a palpable sense of school community where pupils state that they feel safe.

Across the school, staff create inclusive learning environments and safe spaces for pupils to explore their senses and communicate their emotions and feelings. This helps to ensure that the support for pupils with social and emotional well-being needs is developing purposefully. Recently, pupils have contributed proactively to the development of revised classroom expectations. Most pupils demonstrate good behaviour during their learning and play, showing care and respect for each other and staff.

In general, most pupils enter the school with literacy, numeracy, and social skills that are around the expectations for their age. By the time they leave the school, many pupils make at least suitable progress in their learning. Overall, most pupils develop their listening and speaking skills well. Older pupils speak clearly and confidently and adapt their language, expression and intonation purposefully to create effect. In general, foundation learning staff use the outdoor area purposefully to plan beneficial experiences for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across other areas of learning. For example, they create interesting sequence patterns using natural resources collected from the school's garden as part of their theme work.

In a short period of time, the executive headteacher has already made some important strategic decisions to improve the planning of how the school operates. Recently, staff have begun to collaborate with a local school to plan a coherent sequence of purposeful and engaging learning activities. However, the school is still in the early stages of implementing Curriculum for Wales. In general, teachers involve pupils suitably in planning and developing learning activities to include in class topics. For example, older pupils enjoy learning about the history and culture of China and the Middle East through their 'Silk Road' theme. However, the curriculum does not provide suitable breadth and depth to plan for progression in pupils' skills over time. As a result, pupils do not always make sufficient progress, especially in their reading, writing and mathematical skills.

Leaders provide appropriate opportunities for staff to engage in beneficial professional learning that strengthen staff knowledge and understanding effective of teaching and learning. For example, recent training to improve staff's knowledge and confidence in implementing wider digital resources into the provision has resulted in improved opportunities for pupils to apply enhanced digital skills in their learning. As a result, a majority of pupils develop and apply their digital skills successfully in other areas of learning as they move through the school.

Where teaching is most effective, teachers ensure that lessons are delivered at a suitable pace and they encourage pupils to work individually and collaboratively to complete tasks. On occasions, particularly for the older pupils, teachers tend to guide pupils through tasks and pupils do not have enough opportunity to lead their own learning. Overall, teachers and support staff use questioning techniques suitably to support and assess pupils' understanding of their learning. However, teachers do not always use assessment information well enough to plan coherent learning experiences to develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding over time. Consequently, they do not always provide the correct level of challenge or adapt learning experiences to meet pupils' needs.

Although leaders have recently implemented a new marking and feedback process, methods to respond to pupils' work are not consistent across the school. This hinders the understanding of older pupils of what they need to do to improve their work and progress to the next step in their learning.

The school has suitable processes in place to identify and support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). They set appropriate targets to move pupils with ALN forward in their learning. Leaders interact beneficially with a range of external agencies to secure additional resources and offer specialist support to pupils and their families. These arrangements ensure that most pupils that benefit from additional support make suitable progress in relation to their stage of development.

Staff use the locality effectively and plan valuable experiences which enable pupils to learn about their Welsh heritage and culture successfully. For example, pupils take part enthusiastically in a community parade to celebrate the Welsh hero Prince Llywelyn and are highly involved in the town's Eisteddfod. The Criw Cymraeg lead weekly assemblies and take their role seriously and are enthusiastic role models in beginning to promote the use of conversational Welsh around the school. These worthwhile experiences contribute beneficially to developing pupils' Welsh language skills.

Staff encourage pupils, including those from different groups, to become involved in a variety of worthwhile pupil leadership groups in a range of areas. These roles help develop pupils' self-confidence and collaboration skills purposefully. The Sports Ambassadors contribute meaningfully to school improvement by showing good commitment in promoting positive behaviour during breaktimes. As a result, this reinforces friendships outside their own classes successfully.

The school makes appropriate provision for acts of collective worship. Most pupils reflect on values and themes beneficially, such as peace and unity when learning about poppies and remembrance, for example.

In a short period of time, the executive headteacher has swiftly developed a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Leaders now have clear structures and procedures to bring about school improvement. However, currently, these changes are not sufficiently embedded to have had a notable impact on pupils' progress. The headteacher is slowly building the leadership capacity across the school. However, at present, leaders do not always distribute these responsibilities amongst themselves effectively enough to ensure that improvements are sustainable. Additionally, evaluations of monitoring activity do not always ensure that all important areas for development are identified.

The governing body is very supportive of the school and manage the school budget effectively. They provide beneficial scrutiny and challenge to the work of leaders in some areas, for example on improving behaviour and attendance across the school. Overall, they rely too heavily on information provided by the headteacher to assure quality of teaching. As a result, governors do not have a complete overview of the effectiveness and impact of provision on pupils' progress.

## **Additional information**

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for site management do not give any cause for concern.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

## 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

## Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%



## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](http://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](mailto:publications@estyn.gov.wales)

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales)