



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

**A report on**  
**Ysgol Yr Esgob**

**Lon-yr-Ysgol**  
**Caerwys**  
**Mold**  
**Flintshire**  
**CH7 5PZ**

**Date of inspection: May 2024**

**by**

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

## About Ysgol Yr Esgob

Name of provider	Ysgol Yr Esgob
Local authority	Flintshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Voluntary Aided
Number of pupils on roll	63
Pupils of statutory school age	44
Number in nursery classes	11
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 23.7%)	7.0%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 13.2%)	15.9%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/02/2018
Start date of inspection	13/05/2024

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.

## Overview

Ysgol Yr Esgob joined with Lixwm Church in Wales Voluntary Aided School to become the Bryniau Clwyd Federation in 2020. At that time, the headteacher from Ysgol Yr Esgob took on the role of headteacher for the federation. In September 2023, the headteacher took a temporary position with the regional school improvement service. To cover this absence, a headteacher from another local school has taken up the role of headteacher on a secondment basis. This arrangement is set to be in place until April 2025.

Pupils at Ysgol Yr Esgob generally have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and immerse themselves fully in the experiences provided at school. Their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils have a notable influence on the life and work of their school which they use wisely and with high levels of autonomy to bring about positive change, for example to the school environment. They develop particularly good literacy skills and use these effectively across all areas of learning. During their time at school, they make very good progress as learners and in their development as compassionate and caring contributors to school and the wider community.

There are highly effective relationships between staff and pupils. Teachers and a highly skilled team of teaching assistants know the pupils, their needs and interests very well. They provide an exciting and varied range of learning experiences that capture pupils' interests extremely well and promote a love and enjoyment of learning and being at school. Provision to develop pupils' skills is effective overall and supports pupils to make good progress in learning the Welsh language, using number and applying digital skills to research and present their ideas. However, pupils receive fewer opportunities to learn about other mathematical concepts such as shape and measure and their experience of coding and working with databases is limited.

School leaders have a clear vision to develop one school over two sites and are making good progress towards this goal. They have established a strong team ethos and are beginning to make effective use of the opportunities that a federation of school presents, for example by enabling leaders, teachers and teaching assistants to begin to share their ideas and practice. In a few instances, this work has had a notable and positive impact on pupils' experiences at school and their progress. Leaders work well with external partners, and this helps them to have a good understanding of many of the schools' current strengths and to identify opportunities for further improvement. However, within the federation, leaders' roles in evaluating the difference that teaching makes to pupils' progress in lessons and over time are generally at an early stage of development.

## Recommendations

- R1 Further develop leadership capacity across the federation by sharing effective practice and improving the ability of staff to monitor and evaluate the difference that teaching makes to pupils' learning and progress

R2 Further improve provision to support the development of the full range of pupils' numeracy and digital skills

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

### Learning

Many pupils start school with skills and understanding at or above those expected for their age. During their time in school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make good progress from their different starting points.

Most pupils make strong progress in developing their language and communication skills. The youngest pupils are keen to chat with staff and with visitors and talk happily about their work and play. By Year 3, nearly all pupils converse well with peers and adults. Older pupils listen purposefully to gain information, for example when discussing the human digestive system. They volunteer opinions readily, explain their answers and collaborate well in pairs and groups. Most pupils across the school listen well and ask relevant questions, for example in collective worship.

Many pupils develop very good reading skills. The youngest pupils begin to recognise and name a range of sounds and use this knowledge to start to read simple texts. Most younger pupils use their knowledge of phonics to sound out unfamiliar words. By Year 2, many pupils read with confidence and use their skills purposefully in a range of contexts, for example to read the instructions on daily challenges. As pupils move through the school, they build on this progress and develop an effective range of strategies to become fluent readers. For example, older pupils have regular sessions where they develop more advanced skills that they use with increasing independence, for example to use contextual clues to work out the meaning of unfamiliar words. By the end of Year 6, many pupils use inference and deduction effectively to gain deeper understanding of a text. Older pupils apply their reading skills effectively to support their learning, for example by researching tourist attractions in Wales.

The writing skills of most pupils develop effectively. From an early age, they practise mark making and drawing patterns. Over time this develops into forming letters and numbers. They enjoy the range of opportunities to develop their independent writing skills, for example when writing a card to thank a school visitor. By the end of Year 2, most pupils write confidently in a range of genres linked to their topic work. For example, they write letters to Ernest Shackleton to ask to be considered as part of the team to explore Antarctica. Most older pupils plan their writing thoughtfully and show a good understanding of the writing process. They write for a variety of purposes. These include detailed instructions and persuasive texts to attract visitors

to Wales. By the end of Year 6, most pupils develop strong independent writing skills which enable them to reflect and improve their writing successfully and to produce consistently good and occasionally excellent work.

Most pupils develop their mathematical skills and understanding well. The youngest pupils develop their knowledge of number through a range of games and songs and enjoy using counters and other maths equipment. By the end of Year 2, many pupils solve a range of word problems accurately, collect information and record their results in simple tables and graphs. Many older pupils develop a good working knowledge of number and place value and perform a range of calculations in all four operations accurately. They use their calculation skills to solve a range of word problems successfully and manipulate numbers mentally with accuracy. Older pupils develop their data handling skills well, for example by interpreting line graphs. They apply their number skills well in their work across the curriculum. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical skills in other important areas, such as shape and space and measure in maths lessons or across the curriculum.

Younger pupils use their digital skills to instruct a programmable toy to move in a variety of directions and use data handling software to display information about pupils in their class. They use a range of apps and programs to support their learning in language and maths. As they move through the school, pupils develop their use of multimedia tools and word processing packages to an appropriate standard to present and produce work across the curriculum. However, important aspects of digital learning such as pupils' use of databases, coding and spreadsheets are underdeveloped.

Most pupils develop their Welsh language skills very well and use them in a range of contexts successfully. The youngest pupils develop early Welsh language skills through a range of songs and rhymes and use them in purposeful contexts, for example when asking for snacks. By the end of Year 2, many pupils ask and answer a range of questions about themselves or their peers, for example asking them, *ble wy ti'n bwy?* As pupils move through the school, they develop their Welsh skills strongly by increasing their vocabulary and varying sentence patterns. Many older pupils are keen to use their Welsh when speaking in class and with visitors.

Most pupils' physical skills develop well through a range of experiences and activities such as PE lessons and sporting competitions with other local schools. Older pupils develop their thinking and problem-solving skills well and apply these well, for example in lessons where they are challenged to use more sophisticated English vocabulary or when working in the science lab. However, opportunities for younger pupils to engage in purposeful exploration and play that develops their independence further are limited. Many pupils develop creative and musical skills during well-focused drama, art and music lessons. For example, pupils create artwork in the style of local artist Tim Pugh using recycled materials and enjoy opportunities to learn musical instruments such as the cello.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

During their time at school, most pupils develop exceptionally positive attitudes to learning. Their enjoyment of and participation in learning are outstanding. Pupils take

great pride in belonging to the school community and embody the school's values and ethos in all that they do. Behaviour during lessons and at social times is excellent and pupils' attitudes to including new members into the school community are exemplary.

As they move through the school, most older pupils develop strong levels of independence as learners. They use the skills and knowledge they have learned previously and feedback from teachers and teaching assistants to help them move forward, for instance in their development as writers. In most cases, pupils understand the purpose of their learning. They know how it links with what they have learned before and explain how it might help them in the future. They show high levels of resilience, sustain focus when working, persevere and consistently try their best. Older pupils have appropriate influence over what they learn in their topics, for example they suggest what they would like to learn about, and teachers incorporate these suggestions into their planning. In a few instances, opportunities for younger pupils to direct their own learning or follow their own interests are limited slightly by prescriptive challenges set by adults or by adults being too influential in shaping pupils' play.

Most pupils help each other at work and play. They respect, value and learn from the contributions of others. This enhances their progress and enjoyment of school. Overall, pupils' positive attitudes and willingness to embrace challenges support them to make very good progress in their learning and wider development.

Pupils feel safe and valued at school. They form positive relationships with their peers and staff. They know that they are listened to and that they have a strong voice in influencing the life and work of the school. They use this voice wisely and in many ways, for example through their work as members of various pupil groups.

Pupils develop a good understanding of the responsibility that comes with being elected to a leadership position by their peers. Through their work as members of the School Council, Eco Committee and Criw Cymraeg, they bring about positive changes to aspects of school life that they identify and prioritise. The School Council works well to enhance pupils' understanding of children's rights and of the importance of values such as compassion. For example, they raise awareness of the challenging circumstances faced by children around the world and organise fundraising events to try to provide some help. The Eco Committee are proactive in promoting the importance of sustainability, for instance through an energy saving initiative and the development of the wildlife area. These developments provide valuable learning opportunities for pupils across the school. The Criw Cymraeg model the high standards of Welsh that are expected across the school and help to make Welsh fun to learn. Pupils also enjoy opportunities to learn about democracy in their locality, for example by attending local Town Council meetings.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of a healthy diet and lifestyle. They learn about different food types and the effects that exercise has on the human body so that they can make informed choices. They take good advantage of opportunities to be physically active, for instance during PE lessons or as a natural part of their learning when pedalling vehicles in the outdoor learning areas. Nearly all pupils understand the importance of internet safety.

Rates of pupils' attendance at school are good. Pupils arrive punctually with enthusiasm and anticipation of what the day ahead might bring.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

Across the school, staff form caring and respectful working relationships with pupils that foster a supportive, inclusive and positive learning environment. This enables pupils to participate fully in all learning experiences and make consistently good progress.

Pupils receive a broad and balanced range of learning experiences that meet their needs and interests well overall. Older pupils are beginning to influence what they learn by suggesting ideas at the start of topics. The content of the school's curriculum and the effective teaching of it supports pupils' progress well across the areas of learning and experience set out in Curriculum for Wales. A range of interesting themes, such as 'Wales and My Identity' along with a worthwhile range of visitors and trips ensure that learning experiences are varied, interesting and relevant. Experiences include visits to the local church and residential trips to places such as Kingswood and Plas Menai. Pupils have also performed at William Aston Hall in Wrexham as part of 'The First Experiences' concert with the BBC orchestra.

There are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop and use many aspects of their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. Provision to support pupils to become effective readers and writers is a notable strength. Staff create an environment that promotes a love of reading where pupils have access to a good range of literature. This is enhanced by visits from the mobile library, which pupils enjoy greatly. Provision to develop pupils' Welsh skills is strong and ensures that pupils generally make very good progress in learning the language.

The school's approach to teaching mathematics ensures that pupils work successfully with number and apply these skills well across the curriculum. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to learn about shape, space and measure. Pupils have regular and worthwhile opportunities to use a suitable range of digital skills, for example to present their work in posters or media presentations. However, opportunities for them to create databases and develop programming skills are limited.

Provision for the school's younger pupils is developing well. There are worthwhile opportunities for pupils to learn through first-hand experiences and play. Challenges provided for pupils are generally appropriate and ensure a suitable breadth to learning. However, this approach occasionally stifles pupils' capacity to lead their own learning and be creative.

Teaching approaches, especially for older pupils are highly effective. They ensure that pupils engage very well with all opportunities to learn and make good progress. Sequences of lessons have clear and relevant objectives and match pupils' needs very well. Older pupils use these objectives with increasing independence to evaluate their own progress, especially in writing activities. Teachers ensure that pupils have a secure understanding of the purpose and value of their learning. Learning develops at a good pace and there are high expectations for pupils' progress. Teachers generally provide useful opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and small groups,

supporting them to share their own ideas and understanding and to listen and learn from each other. Teachers make effective use of questioning and feedback to address misconceptions and to move learning forward. They provide detailed termly and annual reports for parents.

In classrooms, teachers deploy teaching assistants well to support learning. These staff contribute significantly to the effective learning culture at the school. In a few instances, they support learning exceptionally well using highly developed skills and specialisms.

### **Care, support and guidance**

The school is a highly inclusive learning community. Staff place a high priority on the well-being of pupils. The care, support and guidance provided supports pupils to thrive during their time at school. Pupils become confident to be themselves and to celebrate their achievements. They take pride in sharing their learning with parents, for example on days when parents join them at school to learn about their progress and by sharing their school experiences via a digital platform.

Provision to support pupils' social, cultural and moral development is effective. For example, from a very young age pupils learn to share, to take turns and collaborate with others. Staff support pupils to develop an understanding that there are differences and similarities between people in school, in their local community and around the world. They do this imaginatively in engaging contexts, for example by providing opportunities for pupils to learn about different foods and faiths across the globe. Pupils have valuable opportunities to consider moral issues. This ensures that they understand their rights and act as advocates for fairness for children across many countries and nations. Staff help pupils to develop important values and to become caring and compassionate. Pupils exemplify these attributes consistently, for example when older and younger pupils support each other through the 'buddy' system.

Across the school, relationships between staff and pupils underpin a positive and calm learning environment. The school's approaches to teaching and the learning experiences provided for pupils, generally ensure that standards of behaviour are excellent. When necessary, skilled staff deal positively and sensitively with any situations that arise to help pupils to reengage with the learning on offer.

Provision for pupils with ALN is effective. Teachers and leaders use assessment information well to identify pupils who are not making the expected progress. They offer a wide range of beneficial strategies to boost pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and to support their emotional development. Staff monitor the impact of interventions closely and keep their effectiveness under review. As a result, most pupils who receive additional support make strong progress from their starting points.

There are valuable opportunities for pupils to influence the life and work of the school. Staff ensure that pupil voice groups receive a good balance of autonomy and support. This enables groups such as the Criw Cymraeg, Eco Committee and School Council to have an authentic experience of taking responsibility for representing their peers. Staff take appropriate account of pupils' input when planning topics.



The school provides a suitable range of opportunities for pupils to celebrate local and Welsh heritage and culture. For example, staff ensure that pupils have extensive opportunities to hear and use the Welsh language, explore the work of Welsh artists and engage in activities such as designing websites about Wales. They celebrate Saint David's Day with an annual Eisteddfod. Pupils participate enthusiastically in various activities including art and craft competitions that enable them to showcase their creative talents.

The school has extensive outdoor areas and use these imaginatively to support pupils' well-being and the development of pupils' understanding of their environment and the importance of healthy lifestyles. Opportunities to grow produce including vegetables and fruit enable all pupils to become aware of the importance of healthy eating as well as the route 'from field to plate'.

The school has a strong safeguarding culture and arrangements to keep pupils safe are appropriate.

### **Leadership and management**

The Bryniau Clwyd Federation was formed in 2020 through the amalgamation of Ysgol Yr Esgob and Lixwm Primary School. The headteacher from Ysgol Yr Esgob became headteacher of the federation of schools. In September 2023, the headteacher took up a temporary role with the regional school improvement service. The federation seconded a headteacher from another local school to take over the leadership responsibility in the absence of the substantive headteacher. This arrangement will be in place until April 2025.

In recent times there have been notable challenges to the school community. The acting headteacher has responded to these challenges sensitively, proactively and effectively. She has worked with pupils, staff, governors and parents to develop a strong team ethos and common sense of purpose. She provides reassuring leadership and understands the needs of the communities the schools serve extremely well. This leadership ensures that the federation moves forward as a single body. Across the federation, leadership ensures that there is a calm and compassionate ethos and an uplifting learning environment where nearly all pupils thrive.

The acting headteacher has a clear vision for establishing one school on two sites. In collaboration with leaders across the federation, she is beginning to implement this vision successfully. Leaders are beginning to take advantage of a few of the opportunities that the federation of schools presents. Leaders identify valuable opportunities for pupils from the two schools to learn and enjoy experiences together, for example through residential visits and musical activities. There are increasing opportunities for staff to collaborate and share their expertise for the benefit of pupils. For example, collaboration has led to improvements to the learning environment and provision for younger pupils at Lixwm whilst the digital lead teacher from Lixwm is supporting staff in Ysgol Yr Esgob in mapping out digital skills across the curriculum. Joint working in literacy has seen writing skills improve in both schools. However, this work is still at a relatively early stage of development.

Staff understand their roles and responsibilities well. Arrangements to deploy teaching assistants are effective overall and, in a few instances, highly effective. For example, leaders take make best use of teaching assistants' varied skills and specialisms to benefit pupils' learning and development.

Leaders have a suitable understanding of strengths and areas for development across the federation. They draw upon a range of first-hand evidence, including classroom observations and pupils' work. Leaders work with external partners to support evaluation and improvement work appropriately, for instance when developing their strategy for mathematics and numeracy. However, whilst leaders have an accurate overall picture of the schools' current position, evaluation work lacks precision. It does not focus sharply enough on evaluating the difference that teaching makes to pupils' progress. This means that they occasionally miss opportunities to identify and share highly effective practice or to address areas that need improvement. Arrangements to develop leaders' and staff capacity to engage in monitoring work and share classroom practice across the federation are at an early stage of development overall.

Leaders and staff show the capacity to bring about improvement. For example, they have developed a highly effective curriculum that matches the needs of pupils and the ethos and principles of Curriculum for Wales. Leaders ensure that provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills has a high priority. This provision is consistently strong and nurtures positive attitudes to learning the language.

There are meaningful professional learning opportunities for staff to improve aspects of their practice, for example to develop assessment strategies across the federation. Professional learning supports school improvement and the effective performance management processes for teachers and teaching assistants. This work enhances staff performance appropriately, for example, by enabling them to provide bespoke support for pupils with ALN. Work with external partners such as the local cluster of schools and specialist agencies is beneficial, for example in helping the school support pupils who are new to the English language.

Across the federation leaders and staff have positive working relationships with parents. Parents value the effective communication between home and school as well as opportunities to learn about the schools' work at first-hand, for example by attending workshops about Curriculum for Wales and Assessment. There are regular opportunities for parents to visit school and learn about their child's progress.

Governors undertake their roles effectively. They have a suitable understanding of the schools' strengths and of their progress towards meeting improvement goals. They support the schools' safeguarding culture appropriately and ensure appropriate arrangements for healthy eating and drinking. Governors work with school leaders to use and monitor finances effectively. This includes 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

## 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:

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