



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

A report on

Ysgol Dyffryn Ardudwy

**Dyffryn Ardudwy
Gwynedd
LL44 2EP**

Date of inspection: March 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Dyffryn Ardudwy

Name of provider	Ysgol Dyffryn Ardudwy
Local authority	Cyngor Gwynedd
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	83
Pupils of statutory school age	69
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	7
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 23.0%)</i>	11.9%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 16.1%)</i>	14.5%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	23.2%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	September 2014
Start date of inspection	27/03/2023

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

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website:
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 Dyffryn Ardudwy is a happy and welcoming school that prioritises the well-being of pupils and staff well. The school's inclusive ethos supports nearly all pupils to behave exceptionally well and treat others with respect and care. Most pupils are very proud of their school and apply themselves fully to learning and play experiences. They have a genuine interest in their learning and, as a result, most make appropriate progress during their time at the school. However, there are very few opportunities for them to lead their own learning independently.

Since being appointment fairly recently, the headteacher has built on the team ethos that exists across the school. She has set out energetically to improve the quality of the learning environment and the range of opportunities available to pupils. As a result, they engage in a good range of beneficial learning experiences, including competing in various competitions and working with engaging digital project experts. However, the school's self-evaluation processes are not incisive enough to influence teaching and learning effectively enough.

Staff have an effective working relationship with pupils and support their Welsh language skills successfully. Overall, they question and support pupils to deepen their understanding and develop their skills beneficially. However, teachers have a tendency to over-direct learning, which hinders pupils' ability to lead their own learning. Learning experiences also do not provide enough challenge and opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum regularly enough.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve teaching to challenge pupils effectively and develop their independent learning skills
- R2 Ensure beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their writing and numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R3 Refine self-evaluation processes to ensure improvements in teaching and learning

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Learning

On entry to the school, most pupils have skills that are similar to what is expected for their stage of development, except the oral Welsh skills of a majority of pupils, which are lower than expected. During their time at the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs or those who are eligible for free school meals, make appropriate progress.

Nearly all pupils develop their listening and speaking skills effectively. The youngest pupils follow the staff's instructions appropriately and use an increasing range of vocabulary in their play and learning. In Years 1 and 2, most listen carefully to each other when working together and speak naturally and confidently when discussing their learning experiences, for example when weighing soil and planting seeds in the investigative area. As pupils move through the school, nearly all listen to each other's opinions and ideas maturely and respond confidently to the teachers' questions.

Most of the youngest pupils develop sound early reading skills and begin to recognise the form and sound of letters with increasing confidence. They use phonic methods appropriately to recognise simple and familiar words correctly. By Year 2, a minority read text intelligently. As pupils move through the school, most show an interest in, and enjoyment of, books. They are keen to share their views and show an appropriate understanding of a good range of texts. Many pupils read with increasing fluency and confidence and vary their tone of voice effectively. However, a few of the oldest pupils in the school are unsure at times when reading unfamiliar words.

Many of the youngest pupils develop their early writing skills successfully by experimenting and making marks with chalk and paint. By the end of Year 2, most write appropriately for different purposes, for example when writing a creative story about toys. When they are given an opportunity to do so, the older pupils use their writing skills appropriately in a variety of genres. For example, they respond to a walk to old ruins by writing imaginatively about who lived there. However, pupils do not always build firmly enough on their writing skills or apply their extended writing skills regularly enough across the curriculum. Nor do they use a rich range of vocabulary and mature punctuation to develop their work further. The youngest pupils develop a good understanding of mathematical concepts. Most understand the value of numbers and use standard and non-standards units appropriately when creating scales, for example when measuring the length of objects in the play park. Although the oldest pupils continue to develop their mathematical understanding successfully, they do not apply or extend their numeracy skills purposefully enough across the curriculum.

Overall, most pupils' digital skills are developing suitably. The youngest pupils photograph their work and save it confidently. Year 2 pupils use a tablet computer successfully, for example when listing instructions for pupils in the reception class on how to make a nest cake. The oldest pupils use a wide range of software appropriately to develop their work. They share their work and work together skilfully on an online platform to edit and present their work, for example when researching the features of Eryri National Park to create a website.

Most pupils develop a good range of physical skills as they move through the school. The youngest pupils develop their skills robustly, for example when using different bicycles confidently. Nearly all of the oldest pupils engage enthusiastically in physical activities, such as football, gymnastics and dance lessons.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils enjoy being part of the school community and feel that they are valued by the staff. Across the school, respect is evident in the school's inclusive nature. All pupils behave exceptionally well and treat each other and others with courtesy and respect. For example, the older pupils take care of the younger pupils during lunchtime and set a good example in terms of behaviour and respect for others. They also show empathy towards others in the wider world and are keen to help those in need, for example by supporting a campaign to raise money for the earthquake disaster in Syria and Turkey.

Nearly all pupils feel safe at school and are aware that staff are available to provide advice or support when they have concerns. They understand that emotional well-being is important and play an active and intelligent part in regular circle time activities. The caring ethos contributes well to supporting pupils' well-being and most discuss the importance of eating and drinking healthily confidently, showing a good understanding of the importance of physical exercise. For example, the football team has recently competed in a tournament and older pupils enjoy taking part in outdoor activities. This has a positive effect on pupils' resilience and fitness.

Most pupils are extremely proud of their school. Members of the school councils take their role seriously and are beginning to make a valuable contribution towards the school's life and work. For example, the eco committee organised a school uniform exchange and sent a letter to parents asking for support to clear the garden. This makes a valuable contribution to pupils' sense of the importance of their contribution to school life. Other groups also take direct action to support pupils' well-being and safety. For example, road safety officers monitor safety around the school, while the '*Bydis Buarth*' (Playground Buddies) encourage pupils to play together sensibly on the playground.

Across the school, most pupils concentrate for extended periods successfully and take a genuine interest in their work. They value and respect the contributions of their peers and respond maturely and sensibly during group discussions. Most are keen to take part in learning experiences and play together sensibly. On the whole, most respond appropriately to guidance from teachers and assistants to complete tasks. However, a majority of pupils do not lead their own learning with increasing independence.

Most pupils respond well to questioning and oral feedback from teachers during lessons and are beginning to develop a suitable understanding of how to improve their work. Overall, most pupils take pride in the presentation of their work.

Teaching and learning experiences

Staff have an effective working relationship with pupils, which fosters a supportive and inclusive environment successfully. They manage pupils' behaviour skilfully,

which has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes to their learning. Teachers and assistants work together successfully to support pupils. They communicate with pupils using a good standard of Welsh which, in turn, enriches pupils' language effectively.

In the best practice, teachers' presentations and input stimulates pupils to learn enthusiastically. They remind pupils about previous learning and make effective links with their work. In these sessions, teachers set clear learning objectives and ensure that pupils understand what they need to do to prepare them to work on tasks independently. They use an effective range of questioning techniques and encourage pupils to think deeply and consider their responses. Overall, staff intervene appropriately to move learning forward with individuals and groups. Although staff know the pupils' abilities and needs appropriately, they do not monitor their progress effectively enough to provide activities that challenge them purposefully enough.

Overall, teachers are beginning to provide suitable opportunities for pupils to influence what they learn. As a result, many older pupils enjoy explaining how their ideas contribute to the learning in the different areas of learning and experience, for example by suggesting that they would like to go for a walk to learn more about the local area. In the most effective examples, pupils choose how to present their work, for example. However, teachers do not always provide learning experiences that promote pupils' independent skills and apply their knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum regularly enough. Teachers also have a tendency to over-direct learning, which hinders pupils' ability to guide their own learning. Opportunities for pupils to assess and reflect on their own performance and that of their peers are developing appropriately. As a result, they are beginning to identify the next steps in their learning.

Staff are making appropriate progress towards establishing the principles and content of the Curriculum for Wales. They have worked with pupils, parents, carers and governors to produce a vision that reflects the four purposes effectively. As a result, pupils are beginning to show an understanding of the wider principles of the curriculum, for example by striving to become ambitious learners and persevere successfully with their activities. Across the school, the learning environment is welcoming, attractive and stimulating. For example, the 'florist shop' in the foundation learning classroom provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to practise their early literacy and numeracy skills. However, staff do not provide learning activities in the outdoor areas to enrich learning across the school effectively enough.

Teachers provide a curriculum that provides pupils with an appropriate range of experiences. They plan experiences that celebrate the local area skilfully and use visitors and specialist external links for special projects. For example, pupils have worked together on a creative project called '*Ein Bro*' to create a multimedia animation of a high standard about ruins in the local area.

Curricular experiences promote pupils' understanding of well-being and keeping fit appropriately. Teachers provide regular physical education sessions in a wide range of physical activities, such as gymnastics, swimming and sports. There is also an opportunity for older pupils to take part in adventure activities, which include climbing, paddleboarding and canoeing, to develop pupils' resilience and self-confidence skills.

Overall, staff do not plan activities purposefully enough to develop pupils' numeracy and literacy skills. Provision also does not ensure enough opportunities for older pupils to write at length in a variety of genres to refine and improve their work. As a result, opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical and writing skills constructively in contexts across the curriculum are inconsistent.

The school provides valuable opportunities to pupils to access technology of a high standard. As a result, their confidence in creating and presenting work on a variety of digital platforms across the curriculum is a strength. For example, the older pupils create interesting digital presentations about Welsh castles.

Care, support and guidance

Pupils' well-being is a clear priority at the school and effective arrangements support the emotional, health and social needs of nearly all pupils successfully. For example, staff provide valuable circle time sessions that have been established firmly to provide regular opportunities for pupils to discuss their feelings. All staff have a good working relationship with pupils, which ensures that they feel completely at home in their learning environment. They also take advantage of beneficial opportunities to work with external agencies to support pupils' understanding of how to take care of their own well-being and stay safe, for example by receiving support from the police liaison officer. As a result, the behaviour of pupils across the school is a strong feature of the school and the respect towards each other is evident.

The school has good provision to support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). There is effective co-operation between the ALN co-ordinator, assistants and parents. Pupils are at the heart of the process of setting targets in their individual plans and parents are an integral part of discussions. The co-ordinator tracks the progress of specific pupils effectively and adapts provision where necessary. Teachers and assistants also work skilfully with a variety of partners and agencies to receive specialist support and guidance to support pupils who are receiving additional support. As a result, provision meets the needs of pupils effectively and ensures that they are included in all aspects of school life.

Staff provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of issues relating to values, culture, diversity and inclusion. This is evident in the respect, care and support that pupils demonstrate towards each other. For example, one of the main priorities of the school council is to ensure that the school environment is accessible to all. The school also provides an appropriate range of opportunities for pupils to discover more about their heritage, their identity and their culture. For example, pupils learn about the role of Cadw in taking care of Harlech Castle as part of their theme, '*Gofalu*' (Caring For).

Pupils have recently benefitted from wider learning experiences that are organised to enrich the work of the class, for example by inviting a local vet to visit the school to talk about how to care for animals. This supports their learning well and ensures that pupils learn about their *cynefin* (locality) and the wider world successfully.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development successfully. Valuable opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect in the school assembly and they are given an opportunity to perform in front of audiences in the community

occasionally. Through projects and the use of specialist staff, pupils are encouraged to use their imagination and engage in the creative arts. For example, the older pupils have undertaken a creative project on nearby ruins and all pupils have taken part in the school eisteddfod.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding and all staff undertake appropriate training and relevant discussions regularly.

Leadership and management

The headteacher ensures that the well-being of pupils and staff is a priority at this school. She has a clear vision based on developing pupils' skills and understanding of their local area and the wider world by taking part in a range of beneficial learning experiences. In a short period, the headteacher has created a sense of team among staff across the school, which is beginning to have a positive effect on provision. This includes encouraging teachers to take responsibility for important elements of the school's work, for example by leading staff on developing provision for pupils with ALN.

Overall, members of the governing body know the school well. They make appropriate use of the expertise of members to support the school, for example by taking part in meetings with the ALN co-ordinator to discuss provision. Members of the governing body have recently visited the school to take part in discussions with staff and pupils about elements of provision. This supports their understanding of issues relating to teaching and learning and the school's current arrangements appropriately. The governing body ensures that the school has suitable arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily.

To date, the headteacher and staff have taken part in very few monitoring activities, for example scrutiny of pupils' books and seeking the views of pupils and parents about the school's provision and work. Although they identify a few strengths and areas for improvement, monitoring activities do not focus sufficiently on evaluating the quality of provision and teaching in terms of their effect on pupils' achievement. As a result, the effect of monitoring processes on learning is limited. The school development plan identifies suitable priorities that are beginning to have an appropriate effect on provision and pupils' standards and well-being, for example by improving pupils' reading skills and ensuring consistency in assessment approaches across the school. The headteacher and governors manage the school's funding carefully and allocate expenditure appropriately.

The headteacher encourages staff to take part in a good range of professional learning opportunities that correspond appropriately to the school's priorities and the requirements of individuals. For example, teachers and assistants have attended appropriate training to develop pupils' reading skills and enrich the learning areas. They also work closely with leaders and staff from schools in the area to develop their understanding of the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales by planning a series of learning experiences jointly on specific themes. They have also taken advantage of beneficial opportunities to visit other schools to observe good practice. These activities respond well to improving staff's skills and understanding and are beginning to have an effect on provision and pupils' outcomes.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body/members of the management committee through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior, middle leaders, and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work 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 lessons, including learning support groups and the specialist resource base (where appropriate), 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 (where appropriate) and in outdoor areas
- visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning (where appropriate)
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs
- 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 (<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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website:

<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>

This document has been translated by Trosol (Welsh to English).