



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

A report on

Ysgol Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd

**Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd
Ruthin
LL15 2RU**

Date of inspection: February 2024

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd

Name of provider	Ysgol Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd
Local authority	Denbighshire County Council
Language of the provider	Ysgol Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd is a bilingual school that delivers lessons through the medium of Welsh in the foundation classes. At the end of the phase, pupils can choose to continue their education either through the medium of Welsh or English. Welsh is the day-to-day language of the school.
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Church in Wales Controlled School
Number of pupils on roll	112
Pupils of statutory school age	87
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	11
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 23.7%)</i>	5.4%
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 13.2%)</i>	6.9%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	39.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2023 (Acting) 01/01/2024 (Permanent)
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	December 2015
Start date of inspection	05/02/2024

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.

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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 Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd is a happy, familial and welcoming school. All staff work together effectively to provide a caring, Welsh and safe ethos where staff and pupils care naturally for each other. Pupils very much enjoy their time at the school. They are happy to attend, behave exceptionally well and develop positive attitudes to learning.

One of the school's most prominent qualities is the tireless support provided to pupils to develop their Welsh language skills. The school has a strong Welsh ethos with a clear emphasis on providing a range of valuable experiences that promote pupils' awareness of their local area and the history and traditions of Wales. This deepens their pride in their school and the wider community and creates a strong sense of belonging.

Teachers work together to plan a rich, broad and balanced curriculum of learning experiences. They give good consideration to pupils' ideas when planning the curriculum, which helps to ensure that most pupils show strong motivation and a curious interest in their learning. This enables them to develop the skills they need to access the whole curriculum and make sound progress from their starting points.

An excellent feature of the school is the way in which the staff and pupils develop outdoor learning activities that focus on ensuring stimulating and creative experiences, particularly for the oldest pupils in the forest school. However, teachers do not always provide learning activities that ensure that all pupils are challenged appropriately when learning and to make choices about their own learning.

The school is led effectively. Leaders identify aspects of the school's work that are in need of improvement and the steps needed to make this a reality. Dedicated staff, who work well together as a team, show a strong commitment to promoting continuous and sustainable improvements. Governors have a good understanding of the school's work and support the school effectively.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen opportunities for pupils to make choices about their learning and to work more independently
- R2 Ensure that teaching provides an appropriate challenge for all pupils and that feedback helps them to improve their learning further

What happens next

The school will draw up 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 developing outdoor activities that focus on ensuring stimulating and creative experiences, particularly for older pupils in the forest school, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Learning

On entry to the school, most pupils' skills are around what is expected for their stage of development, except for their Welsh language skills, which is a new language for a majority of them. During their time at the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make sound progress in their learning and achieve well.

Across the school, most pupils speak confidently and politely. Pupils who are latecomers to the Welsh language gain confidence and respond positively to the encouragement to use the language during their activities. The strong Welsh ethos across the school promotes this natural use of the Welsh language well throughout the day. The oldest pupils set a good example for the youngest pupils by leading whole-school assemblies and encouraging them to play playground games in Welsh. By Year 2, most pupils discuss their work confidently by using rich similes, for example when describing the 'little alien' who causes mischief in the classroom. Most of the oldest pupils build well of this firm foundation. Many speak Welsh completely naturally and use rich language and purposeful vocabulary when discussing their work.

Many pupils' reading skills develop well. The youngest pupils use an appropriate range of phonics strategies to read familiar and unfamiliar words correctly. By Year 2, most read with increasing fluency and use their reading skills confidently, explaining the content well, for example when discussing text about the weather. Many of the oldest pupils read intelligently in various contexts in Welsh and English. They vary their tone of voice and use punctuation purposefully to show their understanding. They also develop their higher-order reading skills purposefully to gather information from different sources, for example when researching the Titanic disaster.

Most pupils' early writing skills develop skilfully. They make marks purposefully both inside and outside the classroom and begin to form letters and write simple words. As they move through the school, most pupils' writing develops effectively and they write for a variety of audiences and for different purposes. As their skills develop, many use a good range of punctuation and spell more complex words correctly. At the top of the school, many of the oldest pupils use rich vocabulary in both languages and organise their work sensibly by using paragraphs correctly. They express their

feelings skilfully, for example when writing a diary about a protest opposing the flooding of Capel Celyn.

Most pupils across the school make sound progress in their mathematics and numeracy skills. From an early age, pupils develop a useful range of mathematical skills and enjoy mathematics challenges, and undertake counting games and matching activities enthusiastically. By Year 2, many use their numeracy skills appropriately in other areas of learning, for example when using different scales correctly to measure and compare different-sized stones that 'came from the moon'. Most of the oldest pupils work confidently with the four number rules and develop sound skills when handling data. At the top of the school, many recall number facts quickly, for example when reading and interpreting a train timetable. They apply their measuring skills successfully, for example when developing their ideas for developing the outdoor area.

From an early age, pupils apply their digital skills in a range of creative contexts to support their wider learning. By Year 2, many use a digital tablet confidently, for example when writing instructions for other pupils in the creative area. Many of the oldest pupils use their digital skills well to support their research skills and when writing, editing, re-drafting and presenting their findings, for example about the tropical forest.

Most pupils develop creative, artistic and physical skills skilfully by using a range of materials and techniques. The youngest pupils use sticks, leaves and cardboard boxes to create a warm and cosy home for the hedgehog. They vary tone and colour carefully, for example when conveying a landscape picture with pastels. They apply their creative skills skilfully through drama, role-play and performing in public.

Most pupils develop good physical skills through a range of stimulating activities. They move with good control of the body and recall previous learning while demonstrating different shapes skilfully. They work together effectively in pairs and demonstrate good ball-throwing and catching skills. During their time at the school, pupils participate enthusiastically in a variety of activities, such as swimming and triathlon and athletics competitions. As a result, they have a sound understanding of how to take care of their health and fitness.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils feel happy and safe within the school's inclusive, caring and homely environment. Warm and purposeful relationships between them and the staff ensure that they know whom to approach for help and support. Nearly all pupils behave exceptionally well. They are polite and respectful towards each other and others. An excellent feature of the school is the willingness of nearly all pupils to treat each other with care and consideration and show appreciation for the contributions of their peers.

Most pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and show a clear interest in their activities. They engage positively with class themes and talk enthusiastically about their learning. The youngest pupils develop independent learning skills with increasing confidence and apply a good range of skills and previous learning successfully. As they develop through the school, most pupils focus diligently on their

learning activities for extended periods. As a result, many pupils develop to become ambitious and confident learners who are ready to learn. However, at times, a minority of pupils do not organise and present their work independently enough.

Most pupils work together effectively in pairs and within a group, discussing and communicating appropriately, for example by supporting each other to solve problems and complete tasks in the outdoor area. They respond positively to teachers' oral feedback as they work on their tasks, for example when they pause for short periods to share ideas or highlight good practice. Most value the positive written feedback from staff on the work in their books, which often refer purposefully to the success criteria of the tasks. However, feedback is not always clear about what pupils need to do to improve their work further.

Most pupils are willing to assume responsibilities regularly. They respond positively to opportunities to influence what they would like to learn within their termly themes. This helps them take ownership of their own learning. Many pupils make good use of opportunities to develop their leadership skills through a range of roles and pupil's voice councils. They do so enthusiastically, taking their responsibilities seriously and taking pride in what they achieve. Most pupils talk enthusiastically about the influence of the school council in developing the forest school.

Nearly all pupils develop a sound understanding of the importance of being moral and principled citizens. They develop the ability and confidence to discuss their feeling with others and show empathy towards others in distress. By doing so, their awareness of fairness and equality develops effectively.

Most pupils understand the importance of making good choices that affect their health. They enjoy using the variety of equipment that is available to them during break times, including the climbing equipment and the obstacle challenge. They are enthusiastic and active during physical activities and enjoy taking part in sports clubs, for example the sports club, football and netball. They understand the importance of eating a balanced diet, including eating a variety of fruit and vegetables and drinking water regularly.

Most pupils have a good understanding of online security. They are aware of the importance of attending school regularly and promptly, which contributes effectively to maintaining high attendance rates.

Teaching and learning experiences

Leaders have a clear and robust vision for the school's curriculum which reflects the nature and context of the community, including learning activities which incorporate the linguistic and cultural nature of the area to enrich the themes. Teachers provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to share their ideas as they plan themes and refer to them regularly when delivering activities. They plan purposeful opportunities for pupils to learn about their local area or *cynefin* and about the history and traditions of the area, for example when visiting Eyarth Station following a journey on the railway to Llangollen. As a result, pupils show interest and pride in their village and the wider community.

All staff work together effectively to create interesting and attractive learning areas to provide stimulating and varied learning activities for pupils. Staff plan a wide range of beneficial experiences for pupils in the learning areas both inside and outside the classrooms. Across the school, staff place a clear emphasis on developing pupils' knowledge and understanding by providing practical experiences that support them to develop their skills effectively. For example, the oldest pupils work with a local landscape designer to develop the landscape and outdoor area as a rich and exciting learning resource for learning activities. This provides stimulating and creative experiences for the school's oldest pupils. These valuable learning experiences provide relevant opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy, digital and scientific skills, in addition to their thinking and creative skills, well.

Staff enrich pupils' learning experiences with a range of interesting visitors and visits. They provide exciting opportunities for pupils to work with local artists and creative professionals. For example, pupils work successfully with a contemporary Welsh musician to create a song, before performing it for parents. This strengthens pupils' engagement with the community and Welsh culture effectively. The school enriches the curriculum further through a wide range of additional clubs and activities, such as the coding club, the Urdd club and the sports club.

All staff forge sound relationships with the pupils, which fosters a supportive environment for learning. They model the Welsh language skilfully and provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to nurture their linguistic skills in all aspects of school life. Staff provide valuable learning experiences based on events with a Welsh feel, which allow pupils to use their digital skills successfully, for example when creating an animation to the accompaniment of contemporary Welsh music.

Teachers use a varied range of methods and resources to encourage pupils to learn successfully. In the best practice, teachers plan purposeful opportunities that encourage pupils to develop their independence from an early age, by ensuring access to different equipment and activities that stimulate them successfully. Teachers' presentations are lively and stimulating, which engage most pupils' interest. They ask pupils probing questions which supports them well to recall previous learning. However, in the less effective practice, teachers tend to over-direct learning and the challenge is not always suitable to meet the needs of all pupils. This limits opportunities for pupils to guide their own learning.

Staff provide beneficial oral feedback, which encourages pupils to consider what they have achieved and know how to improve their work. Discussions are purposeful and help pupils to develop their skills successfully. In the best practice, teachers' written feedback provides pupils with useful guidance to develop their work. However, this feedback is not consistent across the school and does not always support pupils to know what to do to make progress in their learning, and how.

Care, support and guidance

The close working relationship between staff and pupils, and among the pupils themselves, leads to a caring community with a familial, friendly and warm ethos which supports the sense of belonging. Teachers and assistants know the pupils exceptionally well and respond purposefully to their emotional and social needs. The positive attitudes of staff support pupils to settle easily and contribute well to school

life. This reinforces their satisfaction and well-being and encourages pupils to foster resilient attitudes to learning.

Provision for pupils with ALN is robust. The ALN co-ordinator (ALNCo) and staff are enthusiastic about their responsibilities and pupils' development. Under the skilful guidance of the ALNCo, staff monitor and track pupils' progress throughout the school and analyse the information effectively. This helps to identify a clear and current picture of the needs of all pupils in a timely manner. They provide a range of support programmes that meet their specific needs successfully. The passion of all staff towards pupils' well-being and development ensures that the learning environment is inclusive and offers most pupils an opportunity to make sound progress from their starting points. The close contact and communication with parents contributes effectively towards reaching this goal. Staff work successfully with a variety of partnerships and agencies to support pupils, for example by working with the speech and language therapy team to provide specialist support.

The school provides purposefully to meet the well-being needs of nearly all pupils. By conducting activities in the forest school, staff support pupils to develop their thinking skills effectively. This contributes well to building resilience and perseverance as pupils solve problems in stimulating activities, for example.

One of the school's strengths is the way in which staff promote and develop pupils' understanding of their identity, heritage and culture. Pupils take advantage of valuable opportunities to celebrate their Welshness and feel that they belong to the local community. Regular opportunities are taken to share and celebrate these aspects through a range of activities which are celebrated through notable exhibitions within the school and on social media. For example, a Harvest Thanksgiving service is held in the church, where the public are invited to donate to a local food bank. The school places a strong emphasis on providing a range of trips and visits to support the curriculum. For example, the youngest pupils travel on the local bus to visit the charity shop as part of their theme work. These activities succeed in expanding pupils' understanding of their local area and engaging and holding their interest in learning successfully.

The school promotes pupils' moral and social development robustly. Pupils are given regular valuable opportunities to reflect on the school's ethos and values. This helps them to understand issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion and develops values such as respect and empathy successfully. Pupils are given valuable opportunities to learn about the wider world, for example when learning about different religions. As a result, many pupils begin to develop their awareness of how diverse society is today.

The school provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to make healthy lifestyle choices. For example, an inquiry scenario was set where a famous footballer wanted to appoint a nutritionist and personal trainer for the Welsh football team. As a result, this was a beneficial stimulus for pupils to investigate ways of keeping fit and eating healthily.

The school's arrangements to prepare pupils for the world of work are effective. The arrangement to invite parents to discuss their career contributes purposefully towards motivating pupils to raise their aspirations for the future.

The school's culture of safeguarding is sound and staff understand their roles and responsibilities in contributing to pupils' safety and well-being. There is effective provision to support pupils to keep themselves safe when working online. The school has robust strategies to promote pupils' punctuality and regular attendance, including daily monitoring, regular communication with parents and follow-up work supported by the local authority. As a result, attendance rates are consistently high.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which is based on ensuring that pupils and staff maintain continuous improvement in a homely and caring atmosphere. He shares this vision successfully with staff, governors, pupils and parents. Promoting the Welsh language and Welshness is at the heart of the school's vision and all of its work. Teachers and assistants contribute towards realising this vision successfully. They promote a culture of safeguarding effectively and, as a result, pupils feel safe at school in their work and play and enjoy their time at the school.

Staff's roles and responsibilities are well-defined and all fulfil their duties conscientiously and effectively. Teamwork is one of the school's strengths and the dedicated staff work together diligently. This ensures that the school's vision is realised in full in the school's work.

Governors understand their roles well and fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and successfully. They contribute purposefully towards setting the school's strategic priorities and have a clear understanding of provision and its impact on pupils' learning. They provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge and hold the school to account on behalf of the local community. The governing body ensures that the food and drink that is provided by the school comply with legislation and has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders know the school well. They have developed thorough processes to evaluate its performance and plan for improvement. Robust self-evaluation procedures are at the heart of the school's life and work. The process is based on a wide range of evidence, which includes lesson observations, scrutinising pupils' work and conducting learning walks. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the school's work are embedded well and enable leaders to identify clearly the most important aspects for improvement. The headteacher ensures that all staff have an active role in the process. This ensures that they are aware of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. As a result, the school has a strong record of reviewing its practice and raising and maintaining standards.

The headteacher and the school's leaders use the findings of the self-evaluation process to form a clear strategic direction which focuses on improving pupils' outcomes and well-being. Short- and long-term aims are realistic and focus mainly on pupils' outcomes. There is a strong awareness and commitment among leaders and staff to address local and national priorities successfully. Purposeful and mindful planning ensures that the school addresses these priorities successfully. Staff work together effectively to realise Curriculum for Wales and are completely committed to delivering a curriculum that excites pupils and engages their interest. Developing

pupils' Welsh language skills and their understanding of Welsh heritage and culture is at the heart of the school's work.

Leaders have established productive relationships with parents, which contribute well to their ability to support their children at home. Effective communication methods ensure that parents are given appropriate opportunities to raise any issues that may have an effect on their children's learning and well-being in a timely manner. The 'Friends of the School' are extremely active and parents provide beneficial extra-curricular experiences for pupils, for example by coaching pupils to compete successfully in eisteddfodau.

The school promotes a culture of professional development which ensures that staff are given regular opportunities to attend courses and training that are linked directly to their individual needs and the school's priorities. A good example of this is releasing a member of staff to work with the schools in the cluster to improve provision for developing pupils' digital and research skills. The school makes effective use of external practitioners to work with staff, for example to improve pupils' spoken Welsh skills and to develop outdoor provision.

The school manages its funding efficiently and uses it sensibly in line with the priorities in the school improvement plan. It makes purposeful use of additional grant funding, including the pupil development grant, and it is used wisely to provide focused support to help and encourage pupils' learning and well-being. Staff use the school's resources effectively to provide an engaging learning environment that support teaching and learning and strengthens pupils' physical and mental well-being. They use the school's extensive grounds regularly, including the forest area, to provide stimulating and creative opportunities for outdoor learning.

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:

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