



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

A report on

**Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Calon y Cymoedd
Betws Road
Betws
CF32 8TD**

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by

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

About Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Calon y Cymoedd

Ysgol Gynradd Calon y Cymoedd is situated in the village of Betws and is maintained by Bridgend local authority. There are 174 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including 20 full-time nursery pupils and 9 part-time pre-school pupils. Pupils are divided into seven classes. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work.

Over a three-year-period, around 20% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. This is slightly higher than the national percentage of 18%. Very few pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. The school has identified around 30% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, which is higher than the national percentage of 21%.

The headteacher was appointed to the post in April 2017 and the school was last inspected in October 2010.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

The pupil's voice and children's wellbeing are a clear focus and are strong features of life at Ysgol Calon y Cymoedd. Nearly all children behave well and treat each other and adults with courtesy and respect. The school benefits from strong leadership, which places the rights of the child at the heart of everything, and this vision is shared successfully across the whole school community. Leaders have high expectations and a clear focus on raising standards continuously.

Staff provide a stimulating, contemporary curriculum that engages pupils' imagination successfully. Nearly all pupils make good progress in their learning, and most apply their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively when working across the curriculum.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Raise standards of reading in Welsh
- R2 Ensure that improvement processes focus in detail on evaluating and improving pupils' standards and progress
- R3 Provide more opportunities for pupils to practice their writing skills independently in the foundation phase

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

On entry to the school, many pupils have skills that are lower than expected for their age. Nearly all make good progress in their learning from their starting points, including pupils with additional learning needs. Most pupils develop their thinking skills effectively.

Across the foundation phase, most pupils acquire an increasing range of vocabulary successfully in various situations. From a low starting point, they develop as confident speakers by Year 2, who enjoy sharing their experiences and opinions. Nearly all pupils develop their listening skills effectively. From an early age, most listen attentively to adults and each other respectfully, and discuss their work enthusiastically. In key stage 2, many pupils speak correctly in Welsh and English, make useful contributions to discussions with their peers and express their views clearly. They listen attentively to each other's views before responding sensibly and effectively to discussions. By Year 6, many pupils' translanguaging skills develop with increasing success, for example when searching for facts on the internet in English about Sir Francis Drake, in order to write a speech in Welsh.

Most pupils' reading skills in the foundation phase are developing appropriately. The youngest pupils are beginning to recognise letters and sounds successfully, and a majority are beginning to build words confidently. However, by the end of the phase, the ability of a majority of pupils to discuss the content of their books has not been developed soundly enough. In key stage 2, most pupils read English intelligently in various contexts. Many vary their tone of voice and use punctuation correctly, for example in order to convey dialogue effectively. Many pupils use different strategies successfully to read accurately in Welsh, but lack of fluency and expression hinders the standard of their reading.

Across the foundation phase, many pupils develop their writing skills appropriately in a range of different forms. By the end of Year 2, they write a sequence of simple sentences appropriately and use relevant punctuation. A minority write for different purposes and in a range of exciting sentences with increasing accuracy, for example when writing a monologue by Owain Glyndŵr. In key stage 2, many pupils write successfully for different purposes and audiences in both languages, for example when creating a letter from a soldier in the trenches in Welsh, or a diary in English from the perspective of a kitchen hand during the Tudor period. By the end of Year 6, a majority punctuate and paragraph written pieces successfully.

Most pupils' mathematical skills are developing well. They possess the ability to calculate and solve problems mentally with confidence during daily quick-fire sessions. In the foundation phase, most pupils apply their skills successfully in various areas of learning. For example, they collect data about different ways of travelling to school, and use this information effectively to create a block graph. Most pupils in key stage 2 use their numeracy skills well in different contexts. For example, they look for the number of calories in different foods in order to create various menus, which identify the calories in every dish.

Across the school, nearly all pupils develop strong ICT skills. Children in the nursery class control a programmable toy to move in a specific direction successfully, with support from an adult. By the end of the foundation phase, most pupils log in to Hwb and begin to use appropriate software to present their work attractively and purposefully. For example, they input information into a spreadsheet in order to create a bar graph of the class's favourite fruit, in preparation for making a healthy smoothie. In key stage 2, most pupils use ICT effectively to present their work in interesting ways. They research the price of fruit in different supermarkets on the internet, and input the information into a spreadsheet in order to compare prices and decide where to buy the cheapest ingredients.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils behave well as they move around the school, during lessons and during leisure time. They treat adults and visitors with respect, open doors for them politely and show pride when talking about their school. Nearly all pupils are caring towards each other and the 'Playground Buddies' care for others conscientiously during break time and lunchtime. Nearly all pupils feel safe at school and know who to approach if they are upset about anything. They are confident that the school responds promptly to any concerns they may have. Nearly all pupils believe that the school deals with any disputes well because of the successful strategies that are implemented by the school, such as the feelings box, the positive pot and discussion time. Their understanding of the importance of staying safe online is sound. They are aware of people who are in need within the school, locally and abroad, and support different charities regularly. As a result, they develop as thoughtful and conscientious pupils.

Most pupils show a positive attitude towards their work, concentrate and persevere for extended periods, and complete their work successfully. Most strive diligently in lessons and work together effectively with their peers in groups and pairs, and respect other people's views. They are not afraid to make mistakes and are willing to suggest different ways to solve a problem, for example in quick-fire numeracy sessions.

The pupil's voice is at the heart of school life. The work of members of the different pupil committees has an effective influence on school life. Members of the children's rights committee lead the task of explaining the rights successfully. They ensure that they have a right to be treated equally, a right to receive an education and that they have rights and responsibilities as individuals. The school council also has a valuable influence on ensuring fairness for all pupils and enriches their playtime experiences by organising a purposeful timetable.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of eating healthily. They talk about which foods are healthy and, through the pupil's voice, the school has established a fruit shop that is led by members of the eco committee. They understand the importance of exercise and take pride in the variety of extra-curricular clubs that are available, such as hockey, cricket and running. This promotes their physical fitness successfully. Most pupils take pride in opportunities they are given to play a part in their community, for example by singing in a local home for the elderly and social activities with a nearby school.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Most teachers have high expectations in terms of standards and pupils' behaviour, and they create a calm and respectful environment for learning. They tailor activities successfully for pupils of all abilities. Many teachers take advantage of regular opportunities to challenge pupils by questioning skilfully and encouraging them to think and discuss effectively with their peers. One of the strengths of teaching is the way in which teachers and assistants work closely with each other in order to raise standards. They support each other when presenting activities to pupils, encourage pupils to listen carefully and reinforce their vocabulary and new terminology in Welsh. They use strategies to promote good behaviour consistently across the school and, as a result, nearly all pupils behave well.

Most staff provide pupils with valuable oral feedback during activities in order to support and challenge them. They encourage and support them skilfully. Many teachers provide simple but effective written feedback. It gives pupils clear guidance about what is good in their work and what needs to be improved. Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to improve the content of their work by re-drafting particular aspects. As a result, pupils of all ages speak intelligently about what is good in their work and the progress they have made. Beneficial opportunities are provided for pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers during specific, regular periods.

Staff understand the principles of the foundation phase well. They introduce new skills, knowledge and understanding effectively and provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to learn through practical experiences. Foundation phase staff provide an indoor and outdoor learning environment that is planned well, and ensure that pupils are given purposeful opportunities to use the attractive learning environment to practice and develop their skills. For example, pupils in the nursery class research different materials when creating houses for the three little pigs. However, at times, over-use of ready-made worksheets limits pupils' ability to write freely and extensively, and to work independently.

Teachers provide an interesting and stimulating curriculum that engages nearly all pupils' interest successfully, and use their ideas when planning the termly projects. They provide a wide range of live learning experiences, which develop pupils' skills and desire to learn effectively. Teachers plan sensible and well-organised opportunities to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. They ensure that pupils are given regular opportunities to reinforce their skills in a wide range of subjects. For example, pupils use virtual computer equipment to see what life was like in the trenches during the First World War. This experience helps them to discuss and write thoughtfully from the perspective of a British soldier a century ago. Recently, teachers have implemented effective steps in order to improve pupils' standards of reading in Welsh. However, they have not yet become embedded fully in order to raise pupils' standards.

Valuable use is made of visitors and educational visits, such as visits to Merthyr Mawr and Cardiff University, in order to create a mindfulness app that raises pupils' awareness of how to cope with their emotional and mental feelings. Visits to Llancaiach Fawr, Swansea University and a local technological factory also enrich the curriculum effectively and develop pupils' skills successfully. The school provides

rich opportunities for pupils to learn about the Welsh language and Welsh culture. For example, they hold a school eisteddfod, study the history of Owain Glyndŵr and perform a bilingual musical for the local community in partnership with three other schools. They also hold a St Dwynwen's disco and invite a nearby school in order to promote the Welsh language successfully within the local community.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a happy, caring and inclusive community that places a very good emphasis on pupils' wellbeing. High quality support is provided for pupils with emotional, health and social needs, and this helps pupils to engage effectively with their learning. A successful example of this support is the positive effect of the school's internal welfare officer. The officer enables pupils to talk about their feelings and complete associated work, which gives them the skills to prepare for life outside school.

The school succeeds effectively in supporting a range of pupils with educational and emotional needs through various interventions. These encourage pupils to take risks in a safe situation without any pressure, and they receive high praise, which promotes their self-confidence and positivity.

The school has effective procedures for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress and wellbeing. These procedures enable pupils to identify the needs of individuals and groups of pupils at an early stage. The wide and comprehensive range of programmes and intervention strategies for numeracy, literacy and wellbeing enable pupils and groups of pupils to receive purposeful and effective support. As a result, nearly all pupils who receive support make good progress in their learning and personal development. Pupils with additional learning needs have effective individual education plans. They are specific and measurable, and pupils and parents contribute purposefully towards setting targets for improvement. The school has begun to develop effective one-page profiles, which ensure a central focus on individuals and, as a result, they identify pupils' qualities and needs well. The school works closely with local schools in order to share good practice and ensure consistency and high quality for these pupils.

The emphasis on developing values is prominent in the school's life. A successful example is the school's assemblies, which focus on the school's eight values. Pupils have a prominent voice in choosing the values and take ownership of them, by using them effectively during their school life. The school maintains effective partnerships with parents and ensures beneficial co-operation for the benefit of the pupils. The school uses up-to-date electronic systems effectively to communicate regularly and successfully with parents, which ensures their regular input into their children's work. The school provides health and fitness workshops for children and their families, which supports the school's families to develop their skills effectively, for example eating healthily, fitness, social skills and play.

The school plays a key part in ensuring that the child's wellbeing is central and that they develop to become responsible, confident citizens with a sound awareness of a healthy lifestyle.

The school places a prominent emphasis on nurturing respect and equality among pupils. The school conducts daily mindfulness sessions, which promote pupils' wellbeing and spiritual, moral and social development successfully. The school provides effective extra-curricular clubs that provide valuable opportunities for nearly all pupils and, as a result, they have a sound understanding of the importance of eating healthily and keeping fit. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Provision to develop pupils' creative skills is successful.

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their skills through musical activities, such as singing during St David's Day celebrations, visiting a theatre company and performing in various shows. As a result, they develop good performing and oracy skills in Welsh.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher's very effective and robust leadership sets a clear strategic direction for developing the school. She has a clear vision that is based on ensuring that the wellbeing of pupils and staff is at the heart of the school's work. She shares this vision effectively with staff, pupils, governors and parents successfully. Members of the senior management team develop their strategic role effectively and support the headteacher purposefully. As a result, there is a culture of high expectations and an ethos of co-operation across the school.

The school has a strong culture of supporting staff's professional development. There are beneficial opportunities for all members of staff to improve their practice in order to raise pupils' standards. This, for example, has led to improving standards of wellbeing and ICT skills across the school. Teachers work effectively with other similar schools to support staff's professional development. For example, they are preparing purposefully to implement the requirements of the new curriculum for Wales by planning learning experiences jointly with teachers from nearby schools. This has a positive effect on teachers' understanding and their ability to plan a wide range of exciting experiences for pupils. Arrangements for managing staff performance are robust, and link directly with the school's priorities and individual staff's needs.

Governors know the school successfully and contribute extensively to self-evaluation processes by scrutinising pupils' work and holding discussions with teachers and pupils. This enables them to challenge the school about its performance and pupils' progress effectively.

Leaders respond successfully to the views of pupils and parents. For example, following feedback from parents, the school has changed the arrangements for extra-curricular clubs, which is having a positive effect on the number of pupils who attend.

Leaders have established successful self-evaluation procedures, including lesson observations, talking to pupils, scrutinising work and analysing data. These procedures enable them to identify the school's strengths and many areas for improvement well. There is a close link between the findings of self-evaluation

processes and improvement plans. The school improvement plan identifies appropriate actions in order to improve aspects of provision and pupils' standards. However, actions are not always incisive enough and do not always focus sufficiently on the standards of individuals or groups of pupils to enable leaders to measure progress effectively.

Leaders manage resources proportionately, and the budget is used effectively to respond to specific needs. A good example of this is the ICT resources that have been provided recently. These have a positive effect on opportunities for pupils to apply their skills across the curriculum. The school makes very purposeful use of the pupil development grant, for example to improve the skills and promote the experiences of specific pupils.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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