



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

A report on

**Ysgol Santes Helen
Twtl
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
LL55 1PF**

Date of inspection: January 2018

by

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

About Ysgol Santes Helen

Ysgol Gynradd Gatholig Wirfoddol Santes Helen is the only Catholic school in Wales that teaches specifically through the medium of Welsh. It is situated in the Twtil area in the town of Caernarfon in Gwynedd local authority.

There are 92 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including eight part-time nursery pupils. They are divided into 4 mixed-age classes. Thirty-nine per cent (39%) of pupils speak Welsh at home and 17% are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Approximately 14% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is lower than the national percentage. The school has identified 28% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, which is higher than the national percentage.

The headteacher has been in post since 2004. The school was last inspected in 2011.

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

Ysgol Santes Helen is a happy and caring school that has a strong ethos of inclusivity permeating through it. Pupils behave well and treat each other and other people with respect. Most pupils make good progress from their starting points.

Teaching is good and pupils are given broad opportunities to complete exciting tasks that engage their interest and enthusiasm to learn. Assistants support teachers well both inside and outside the classroom to provide beneficial education for pupils.

The headteacher has a clear vision, which she shares effectively with her team. All members of staff have a sound understanding of their roles and teachers support the headteacher effectively by leading specific areas of the school's life and work.

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 Develop the outdoor area for the foundation phase further
- R2 Ensure regular opportunities to challenge all pupils effectively
- R3 Improve pupils' attendance

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, a majority of pupils have skills that are lower than expected for their age. While there, most make good progress in their learning from their starting points, including pupils with additional learning needs. Most pupils develop their thinking skills effectively.

A majority of pupils are unable to speak Welsh on entry to the school, and very few do not speak English either. However, they acquire the Welsh language at a very early stage and their oral skills soon develop strongly. In the foundation phase, most use an increasing range of vocabulary successfully in a variety of situations. They listen well to adults and each other, and converse and discuss their work enthusiastically and respectfully. Across key stage 2, most pupils develop their oracy skills successfully in both languages. Most contribute well to discussions, and express their opinion clearly and maturely.

Most pupils have good reading skills. They develop their phonological language effectively in the youngest classes and use this knowledge in order to build words successfully. By the end of Year 2, many develop as fluent and confident readers. Many pupils' reading skills develop skilfully across key stage 2. By Year 6, many read fluently and maturely in both languages. They are able to speak enthusiastically about novels and acquire information from information books skilfully by using the content and index effectively to support their work across the curriculum.

In the foundation phase, many pupils write an increasing range of simple sentences independently. By Year 2, they write for different purposes, for example a portrayal of Sion the Giant and a letter to Father Christmas. In key stage 2, most pupils build firmly on their writing skills in both languages. They have a broad awareness of the features of different forms of writing, and use their knowledge to write well across the curriculum. Most of the most able pupils are able to choose interesting vocabulary and show an increasing awareness of audience, for example when writing a weather bulletin for children in Lesotho, or a letter home from the trenches during the First World War from the perspective of a young soldier.

Most pupils make sound progress in their numeracy skills and use them successfully across a range of different contexts. They build on their previous learning successfully, for example when dividing numbers into hundreds, tens and units. By Year 2, most develop a good understand of measurement, money, time and handling data. A majority of pupils in key stage 2 have a sound understanding of place value, and they are able to use data with increasing accuracy and present it in various forms. A majority of older pupils understand that different graphs need to be used to convey information in a variety of subjects across the curriculum, such as a line graph in science to show the effect of increasing weight on the length of a spring. By the end of Year 6, most solve challenging problems in their mathematics skills, for example the cost of repairing Cante'r Gwaelod after a storm.

In the foundation phase, most pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developing soundly. They are able to input information into a

rudimentary database with support. They are able to control a programmable toy independently. By Year 2, most are able to input simple data to create a bar graph from information. With support, they are able to use an app to create a weather report on video by using a green screen. Most pupils continue to make good progress across key stage 2. They use word processing packages successfully to present their work. They create effective presentations to show research into sinking and floating and are able to create effective databases, for example to record the number and types of lifeboats on the Titanic and the number of people who were saved from each part of the ship.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils feel happy and enjoy the school's life and work. Most pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily and the effect this has on the body. Most pupils understand the importance of exercise and take advantage of opportunities to join in with the various opportunities that are available at the school. They feel safe at school and are happy to discuss any concerns with members of staff, and are confident that they listen to them. Nearly all pupils have a sound awareness of how to stay safe online.

Most pupils behave well in lessons and on the playground. They are polite and caring, and treat each other with respect. The school's motto, 'Câr dy gymydog' (Love thy neighbour), can be seen clearly in pupils' attitudes towards others. Most pupils listen attentively in lessons and are enthusiastic to start their tasks. Most have a positive attitude towards their work and are able to persevere for extended periods. Nearly all pupils are aware of their individual targets and know how to improve their work.

Most pupils develop as knowledgeable and moral citizens. They show confidence and resilience in their life at school and when interacting with others. Most older pupils talk enthusiastically about the opportunities they are given to make choices about their learning. Pupils' views are considered through the work of the class and school councils, but there is little evidence of the effect this has had on school life.

Most pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly. However, over a period of four years, the school's attendance percentage has placed the school consistently in the bottom 25% of similar schools, despite the school's efforts to improve this.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The standard of teaching is good. The best features of teaching are based on high and consistent challenge and high expectations from teachers. Teachers usually make effective use of a variety of successful teaching methods, which ensure that most pupils achieve well and apply themselves fully to their learning. They engage pupils' interest in lessons. Teachers and assistants use open-ended questions in order to stretch and develop pupils' responses further in order to challenge them and find out what they understand. There is an effective working relationship between teachers, assistants and pupils in all classes. This encourages respect and courtesy, and adds to the familial and inclusive ethos throughout the school.

Teachers provide a broad and balanced curriculum, and exciting experiences and challenges for pupils, which usually engage pupils' interest and their enthusiasm to learn. The quality of teaching is effective across the foundation phase. Staff comply with the foundation phase principles and this develops pupils' independence skills at a very early stage. Teachers plan effectively to develop pupils' communication, numeracy and ICT skills through themes and interesting learning experiences. Staff use the areas of the classroom well to encourage pupils to explore and to use their skills across the areas of learning, for example in their work on the Gruffalo. However, the outdoor areas have not been developed sufficiently to provide beneficial learning experiences for pupils outdoors.

In general, key stage 2 teachers encourage pupils to use their skills in a variety of tasks. At the top of the school, teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to have input into what they learn, which engages their interest and encourages them to apply themselves to their learning. They plan to develop pupils' Welsh and English literacy skills soundly through a range of themes and activities that build on their previous learning effectively. In the best practice, purposeful presentations engage pupils' interest, weave a number of curricular elements into interesting tasks and stimulate them to contribute in lessons. In the few activities that are not as effective, the level of challenge and expectations are not high enough to ensure that all pupils achieve to the best of their ability.

Teachers use successful assessment procedures when giving oral and written feedback to pupils. Written responses to pupils' work are simple and effective. They give pupils clear guidance on what is good in their work and what needs to be improved, for example by using 'pleasing pink and growing green' (pinc yn plasio a gwyrdd i wella) strategies. Pupils are given regular opportunities to discuss their strengths and areas that need attention.

Teachers and assistants plan effectively for pupils with additional learning needs. As a result, nearly all make good progress against their targets.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a caring community where pupils' wellbeing is given a high priority. Staff make sure that there is a warm and welcoming environment and that all individuals' needs are met. The advantages of a healthy lifestyle and developing pupils' physical health are promoted effectively across the curriculum and in a number of extra-curricular activities. There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to take part in cultural and artistic activities, including the Urdd Eisteddfod.

The school promotes high values that help pupils to treat others with respect. Purposeful collective worship sessions, and periods for reflection, make a valuable contribution towards pupils' spiritual and personal development. There is a great emphasis on nurturing values such as fairness, justice and tolerance. This encourages pupils to consider how they can help others, for example by comparing a child's life nowadays with that of a child in the Victorian age.

The school has appropriate systems to identify and track pupils' progress. These include using and analysing a variety of information, including standardised tests. Leaders make suitable use of results to organise comprehensive programmes of

support for pupils who need support or an additional boost. Classroom assistants support pupils effectively in a variety of ways, including through the use of intervention programmes. The school provides well for pupils who need emotional or social support.

There are good arrangements for supporting pupils with additional learning needs, and pupils who need support are identified at an early stage. Individual education plans are clear and the school works effectively with external agencies to support pupils, for example the speech and language service. Parents' views are considered when setting targets, and individual plans are reviewed regularly.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. Not all members of staff have received training on the dangers of radicalisation, in line with the school's policy.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher has a clear vision that focuses on ensuring an inclusive learning community, in which a high priority is given to pupils' standards and wellbeing. She has a good knowledge of the school and shares the vision effectively with pupils, staff, parents and members of the governing body. As a result, all staff and governors work together successfully as a team in order to ensure an inclusive, safe and hard-working learning environment for pupils.

All members of staff have a sound understanding of their roles and meet regularly in order to discuss provision, outcomes and pupils' wellbeing. They show a strong commitment to developing and promoting further improvements by implementing a number of purposeful strategies, such as improving pupils' Welsh writing skills and ICT skills. Teachers support the headteacher effectively by leading specific aspects of the school's life and work, for example by leading literacy across the school and taking responsibility for the foundation phase. This has a positive effect on provision and pupils' outcomes, in addition to developing teachers' leadership skills effectively. This also ensures that leadership responsibilities are shared effectively across the school.

The headteacher and teachers have worked effectively with the governing body in order to establish robust quality assurance procedures. Regular meetings ensure that members of the governing body receive regular information from the headteacher and staff, including progress against the priorities in the improvement plan. As a result, they have thorough knowledge of the school's performance, which enables them to support the school and hold it to account for its performance successfully. Sub-committees, such as the school development committee, make a very valuable contribution towards the school's strategic direction by taking part in regular activities. For example, they work with the headteacher and staff to observe lessons, scrutinise books and talk to pupils. This ensures that they have a clear overview of standards and provision.

The school has beneficial procedures to self-evaluate important elements of provision and standards. It makes effective use of performance data analysis, findings from monitoring lessons and scrutinising books when evaluating progress against priorities for improvement. The headteacher and the chair of the governors

ensure that all staff and governors are included in the self-evaluation process. Although slightly descriptive in places, the self-evaluation document is purposeful and provides an honest and accurate picture of the school. There is a suitable link between the outcomes of the self-evaluation report and priorities in the school development plan. This plan focuses firmly on improving standards and identifies staff responsibilities clearly. It includes sensible timescales and appropriate criteria to measure their effectiveness.

The school has an appropriate number of qualified staff to deliver the curriculum. In general, leaders take appropriate advantage of staff expertise; for example, the leader of the foundation phase uses her expertise to lead ICT across the school. There are effective performance management arrangements in place for staff, which set clear objectives to increase their knowledge, understanding and skills. As a result, all staff are given beneficial opportunities to develop professionally in line with their needs and the school's priorities. The school also encourages and supports staff to undertake external courses in order to improve their skills and understanding further. For example, three assistants have completed undergraduate courses and two have returned to the school as qualified teachers.

The headteacher and governors manage expenditure effectively. Good use is made of the pupil development grant to improve provision to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of pupils who are eligible to receive it.

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.

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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