



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

A report on

**Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen
Ffordd Coetmor
Bethesda
Gwynedd
LL57 3NN**

Date of inspection: September 2019

by

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

About Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen

Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen is a naturally bilingual secondary school that provides education for pupils between 11 and 18 years old. The school is situated in the small town of Bethesda and is maintained by Gwynedd local authority. One point two per cent (1.2%) of pupils live in the 20% most disadvantaged areas in Wales.

There are 466 pupils on roll and this is higher than at the time of the last inspection in November 2012, when there were 360 pupils on roll. There are 57 pupils in the sixth form. Ten per cent (10%) of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the national percentage for secondary schools of 16.4%. Twenty-three per cent (23%) of pupils are on the school's additional learning needs register, which is very close to the national percentage. Three point three per cent (3.3%) of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is higher than the national figure of 2.2%.

Around 78% of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes and most speak Welsh fluently.

Very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. No pupils speak English as an additional language.

The current headteacher was appointed to the post permanently in September 2018, following a year as acting headteacher. The senior leadership also includes two deputy headteachers and one assistant headteacher.

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 Dyffryn Ogwen is a close-knit and caring community, and the relationship between the pupils and all staff is a robust feature. Many pupils enjoy coming to school and benefit greatly from the valuable opportunities that are available to learn about local history and culture, and contribute to the life of the school and society. Teachers and support staff know their pupils very well and are very supportive of them.

Overall, a majority of pupils do not make enough progress during their time at the school. Opportunities that are provided to develop their subject skills, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are not sound enough to ensure that they reach their potential.

Over the last three years, leadership has not had a positive influence on standards in key stage 4. Following a period of instability, a new senior leadership team is now in place. Very recently, this team has identified the main areas for improvement and has put appropriate procedures in place to respond to these priorities. However, it is too early to measure the effect of these new procedures on pupils' standards.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Adequate and needs improvement
Teaching and learning experiences	Adequate and needs improvement
Care, support and guidance	Adequate and needs improvement
Leadership and management	Adequate and needs improvement

Recommendations

- R1 Improve standards
- R2 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment
- R3 Improve provision to develop pupils' skills, particularly in numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT)
- R4 Improve the quality of leadership at all levels
- R5 Strengthen performance management processes and ensure a clear system of accountability

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will produce an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress around 12 months after the publication of this report.

Main findings

Standards: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Overall, pupils do not make the expected progress during their time at the school. They do not make enough progress in their subject skills and their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

A majority of pupils recall previous knowledge appropriately and use this information suitably when completing new tasks. However, in a majority of lessons, pupils do not make as much progress as they could due to a lack of opportunities to expand their understanding and develop their skills. Only in a very few lessons do many pupils make sound development in their understanding of the subject and show strong literacy skills.

A majority of pupils listen carefully to the teacher and each other. When they are given an opportunity to do so, a majority of pupils communicate with each other in small groups in Welsh with ease. However, they use many English words when talking. They do not have a sound grasp of rich, general vocabulary or various subject vocabularies. As there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their oracy skills in lessons across the school, overall, many pupils are reluctant to make oral contributions. They lack confidence when answering questions and provide very brief answers. In a very few lessons, in which there is a stimulating environment and valuable opportunities to develop oracy skills, many pupils provide extended responses that explain their views clearly. In these lessons, they elaborate on their views eloquently and have accurate diction and rich vocabulary.

A majority of pupils read aloud meaningfully, although they do not do so confidently. They gather information and find facts in text successfully, for example when explaining a young woman's pilgrimage to Lourdes in religious education lessons. However, only a minority of pupils show sound higher-order reading skills, such as analysing the features of styles in texts and explaining their effect on the reader. In a very few lessons, pupils develop their reading skills very skilfully, for example when analysing the picture that the poet Gwenallt creates in his poem, 'Trychineb Aberfan'.

A majority of pupils organise their work effectively in paragraphs; however, too often, they express themselves in short sentences and with a narrow range of vocabulary. There are shortcomings in the spelling, punctuation and grammar of a significant minority of pupils', and they make careless, frequent errors in their written work. The most able pupils show strong Welsh writing skills and express themselves clearly and with sophisticated vocabulary. They vary and experiment confidently with idioms and similes in order to create original and memorable written pieces, for example when writing a monologue by a boy called Suva in response to a tragedy in a factory in Bangladesh. More able pupils use a variety of beneficial techniques to enrich their written work in English, such as presenting statistics, asking rhetorical questions and using idioms skilfully.

In mathematics lessons, a majority of pupils use a wide range of number techniques confidently, for example to calculate length, area and volume, and when discussing percentages and fractions. However, a minority of pupils are not sure about

important facts and rules, such as how to use the Pythagorean theorem. Less able pupils are unsure when using tables. In a few subjects other than mathematics, pupils apply their number skills appropriately. For example, in physical education lessons, they calculate the pace of a runner in a race successfully. However, pupils do not use their numeracy skills enough to solve everyday problems in appropriate lessons across the school.

A majority of pupils develop their ICT skills suitably by using an appropriate range of digital programs in their ICT lessons. However, they do not make enough progress in these skills across the school.

When opportunities arise, a majority of pupils demonstrate robust thinking skills. They respond appropriately to tasks and work productively in pairs to solve problems. For example, in Welsh lessons, pupils come to meaningful and mature conclusions when considering whether or not refugees are welcome in Wales. In history lessons, pupils develop profound thinking skills when considering whether Henry the Seventh deserves his place as a Welsh hero.

Pupils' performance at the end of key stage 4 has declined every year over the last three years and is much lower than the performance of pupils in similar schools. The performance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals has varied over the same period, but it is consistently lower than the performance of this group of pupils in other similar schools. Only a few pupils with special educational needs (SEN) gain level 2 qualifications in the core subjects, but only a very few pupils have left the school without a qualification during the last four years.

In the sixth form, the number of pupils who gain at least 3 level 3 qualifications is notably higher than the national percentage. The number of pupils who complete their courses is a positive feature. However, on the whole, they do not make as much progress as pupils with similar previous levels of attainment in other schools.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Many pupils feel safe at school and feel that there are appropriate arrangements to deal with instances of bullying. They are aware that they have the support of staff should any problems arise.

Many pupils treat their teachers with respect. They take pride in the supportive and close-knit relationship that they have with the school's staff. They believe that teachers and other adults at the school listen to them and that their views are important. A majority of pupils arrive at their lessons punctually and behave appropriately. However, a few are not considerate enough of others when moving from one lesson to the next and are unsure how to behave with visitors.

On the whole, a majority of pupils have positive attitudes towards their work, persevere with tasks appropriately and work together suitably in groups. However, in a minority of cases, pupils do not try hard enough in individual or group tasks, and are content to give very brief responses or present a minimal amount of work. Where there are valuable opportunities to develop independent learning skills and stimulate their minds, a few pupils show a strong motivation to learn. They persevere with more ambiguous work and respond enthusiastically to challenges.

Many pupils believe that the school helps them appropriately to understand the importance of healthy living, and how eating and drinking healthily affects their health. A majority of pupils benefit from taking part in a wide range of sports and wellbeing activities outside lessons, such as kayaking, squash and yoga.

A few pupils develop valuable co-operation skills by taking part in a variety of local and national competitions, for example by working together to create a website about 'Ein Dyffryn Ni' (Our Valley) in a national Urdd competition and competing in Eisteddfod Gadeiriol Dyffryn Ogwen. The girls' cricket team won the British Secondary School of the Year award in 2017 with the 'Chance to Shine' programme, which promotes opportunities for girls.

A few of the school's older pupils develop valuable skills in co-operating with others by conducting literacy support sessions for the school's younger pupils and holding a science club. The 'Food and Nutrition' pupil group has worked productively with the school's staff and had a positive influence on the choice in the canteen by ensuring an extensive selection of healthy foods. Members of the school council have strived to improve the environment by placing benches around the site and have succeeded in reducing the use of plastic significantly.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

In most lessons, teachers have a positive relationship with their pupils. They manage behaviour appropriately and ensure that there is a nurturing learning environment. They are supportive of their pupils and know them well. However, in too many cases, they do not ensure an appropriate level of challenge or support for pupils of different abilities to allow them to reach their potential.

In a few cases, teachers plan purposefully to ensure very sound progress in pupils' subject knowledge, based on their previous achievement. They plan challenging, purposeful tasks that are of interest to pupils and stimulate learning. In these lessons, pupils make strong progress.

Overall, teachers plan tasks that maintain pupils' interest. They present appropriate explanations and are suitable language models. However, in a minority of cases, guidance and support from the teacher are not adequate to ensure that less able pupils understand the requirements of tasks in full. Overall, teachers' expectations in terms of what pupils are able to achieve are also not high enough. Shortcomings in planning include setting tasks that do not provide enough challenge for pupils, slow rates of learning or tasks that continue for too long. In these lessons, teachers do not provide enough opportunities to develop pupils' oracy skills because they talk too much themselves and control learning excessively. This means that pupils are not given enough opportunities to discuss in groups, develop thinking skills and work independently of the teacher.

Most teachers respond appropriately to individual pupils' work as they go around the classroom. In a few lessons, teachers ask questions very effectively. They use open-ended and challenging questions purposefully to stimulate discussion and make pupils think very profoundly. They give clear explanations of expectations and use pupils' answers productively to move learning forward. Pupils in these lessons make strong progress in their subject skills and thinking skills. However, a minority of

teachers do not use questioning effectively enough to check pupils' knowledge and understanding and develop them further. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to model answers or present their work in front of their peers in order to stimulate discussion about the quality and accuracy of their work. This means that pupils are often unsure of the expectations and requirements of tasks, particularly those who are less able.

Teachers in a few lessons do not set high enough expectations in terms of the accuracy and formality of pupils' spoken language, and do not correct inaccurate language often enough.

The school's curriculum provides suitable learning pathways and a comprehensive variety of courses to meet pupils' needs. It works effectively with local schools and further education colleges to expand provision for pupils in key stage 4 and the sixth form.

The school works appropriately with partner primary schools to organise suitable transition activities, which ensure that pupils settle successfully. Overall, there are suitable arrangements to support the development of pupils' skills from key stage 2 to key stage 3.

The school provides valuable opportunities to support pupils' understanding of their local history and culture by studying the strike at Penrhyn Quarry and the work of Caradog Prichard. The school also offers a broad and successful provision of experiences to enrich the curriculum. This includes 'Amdani' (Go For It) activities, which develop younger pupils' leadership skills, skills week and activities week. There is appropriate provision of activities that link the school and its pupils with the local community. For example, pupils are given a valuable opportunity to join the local library and develop beneficial opportunities for the community through the work of the 'Grŵp Llechi'. Opportunities to develop interest and skills in sports are one of the school's strengths.

The school provides effectively to teach pupils about the advantages of speaking Welsh and being bilingual. A notable example of this is the joint project with Careers Wales to create a unit to promote young people's understanding of the value of bilingualism in the world of work.

The literacy co-ordinator has created a very high quality website for subject teachers to help them to plan valuable literacy tasks. This includes purposeful resources to help them to plan rich tasks. Arrangements for numeracy and ICT across the curriculum are less developed.

There are very few opportunities to motivate and raise the attainment of more able and talented pupils inside and outside of lessons. The school holds beneficial literacy and numeracy intervention groups for pupils with poor skills. Teachers do not make sufficient use of the information in the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) when planning and delivering lessons in order to meet their needs.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

The school is a close-knit and caring community that provides beneficial support and guidance for its pupils. All staff know the pupils well and foster a supportive ethos that promotes pupils' wellbeing successfully. The school's arrangements for monitoring pupils' attendance are sound. These include effective reward systems and successful co-operation with parents and the welfare officer.

The school has purposeful arrangements to support pupils with emotional, behavioural, health and social needs. Inclusion rooms, such as 'Hafan Charlotte', provide them with a calm and nurturing environment, and the school has positive programmes to promote all pupils' personal development.

Provision for pupils with SEN is appropriate. The school uses support staff beneficially to provide suitable support for these pupils. The school works effectively with a wide range of agencies and partners, who provide valuable specialist support for individual pupils. However, teachers do not make sufficient use of pupils' individual profiles in order to meet their needs effectively.

Very recently, the school has strengthened whole-school and departmental progress-tracking systems. The new arrangements are appropriate and enable leaders to identify individuals and specific groups of pupils who are underachieving. However, over time, the school's arrangements for setting targets and tracking pupils' progress have not been effective, and leaders have not addressed pupils' underperformance carefully enough.

The school communicates with parents regularly through newsletters and social media. Concise interim and annual reports are presented to them, which include relevant information about pupils' progress and identify their strengths and weaknesses. The school provides pupils with useful guidance and advice in terms of subject options and future career choices.

The school provides appropriate opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is done through school assemblies, guest speakers and a suitable personal and social education programme. This programme helps pupils to live healthy physical and emotional lives. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to take part in local and national eisteddfodau. Beneficial educational trips are organised, such as to the theatre at Venue Cymru in Llandudno and the Natural History Museum in London. The school holds a popular community carol evening at Glanogwen Church every year.

There are suitable arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily. There are also many beneficial opportunities for pupils to take part in sports and fitness activities.

Very recently, the school has increased opportunities for pupils to influence decisions about school life by creating 'Grwpiau Llais' (voice groups) for the curricular subjects and other issues, such as environmental work and language strategy. However, it is too early to measure the effect of these arrangements on the quality of provision.

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

Since the retirement of the former headteacher, the school has faced a period of instability in which it had an acting headteacher for a period and interim members of the senior leadership team. The acting headteacher was appointed permanently in April 2018 and, in April 2019, an additional deputy headteacher was appointed to the team from outside the school. A new assistant headteacher was appointed in September 2019. Both deputy headteachers and the assistant headteacher work together effectively and are very supportive of the headteacher. The senior leadership team has a clear vision that is based on being a school that 'reflects the naturally Welsh community of which it is a part, with an emphasis on developing our pupils' bilingualism'.

The senior leadership team's responsibilities have been restructured, and responsibilities have been distributed suitably to focus on leading the main strategic areas. All members have suitable job descriptions that prioritise strategic responsibilities. They also lead on specific aspects of teaching and learning, and pupils' wellbeing. The line management structure has been re-organised and the headteacher supervises the senior leadership team's link work appropriately. Although a majority of members of the senior leadership team are new to their roles, they have succeeded in implementing clear processes to monitor the school's work. As a result, they have a clear understanding of the school's main strengths and areas for development in terms of provision. However, many of these processes are very new and have not had enough of an effect on raising standards or improving the quality of teaching.

The progress team's roles were re-organised in September 2019 to place a more specific focus on tracking pupils' progress in order to raise standards. Recently, the school has devised a broad programme to develop middle leaders' leadership skills.

A majority of middle leaders identify strengths and weaknesses within their areas effectively. However, they do not use this information successfully enough in order to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching. A majority of middle leaders do not set high enough expectations for pupils in order to ensure that they reach their full potential. Following recent training, middle leaders are beginning to make purposeful use of analysing pupils' performance data in order to identify specific aspects that need to be improved.

Governors are supportive of and very loyal to the school. They are aware of its main strengths and areas for development. Through their link work, they have a clear understanding of the departments' work. However, governors have not succeeded in challenging the school adequately in order to raise pupils' standards and improve the quality of teaching. Governors have robust arrangements for managing funding and ensure that the school uses its funding appropriately in order to maintain the curriculum and ensure valuable experiences for pupils. Financial grants, such as the pupil development grant, as used appropriately and, as a result, the attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals has improved over time.

Recently, the school has strengthened its procedure for evaluating and planning for improvement in order to ensure consistency across the school, with an appropriate emphasis on using data intelligently. There are appropriate procedures for gathering first-hand evidence through lesson observations, scrutinising books and seeking to hear the learner's voice. These procedures provide leaders with a clear picture of strengths and areas for development. However, leaders do not use all of this information strategically enough in order to plan for improvement effectively.

The school has a suitable programme of internal training, in which staff share good practice in teaching and learning. As a result of these sessions, valuable packages have been created, which show effective teaching practices on themes such as improving consistency in the quality of feedback for pupils. Although there are extensive opportunities for teachers to take part in professional learning experiences at school, these have not had enough of an effect on standards and the quality of teaching at the school.

Performance management arrangements for staff have a clear structure. Suitable targets are set, which include priorities in terms of raising standards and priorities from the school improvement plan. There is not a clear enough link between individuals' performance management priorities and the training that is organised to meet improvement targets.

Despite the instability, the school is now in a more robust position in terms of the permanent membership of the senior leadership team. They have a clear vision, more robust structures and a sound grasp of the school's priorities for improvement.

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 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 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' wellbeing, 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)

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:

Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

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

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