



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

A report on

**Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw
Folly Road
Trevethin
Pontypool
Torfaen
NP4 8JD**

Date of inspection: April 2019

by

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

About Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw

Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw is a designated Welsh-medium school for boys and girls between 11 and 18 years old, and is maintained by Torfaen local authority. There are currently 837 pupils on roll, including 123 in the sixth form, which is slightly lower than the 989 pupils at the time of the last inspection. The school serves a wide catchment area and provides Welsh-medium education for pupils from neighbouring local authorities.

Most pupils come from white ethnic backgrounds. Around 6% of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. However, as pupils are educated through the medium of Welsh in primary school, nearly all speak Welsh fluently by the time they arrive at secondary school. Thirteen point one per cent (13.1%) of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the Welsh average of 16.4%.

Twenty three point three per cent (23.3%) of pupils are on the school's additional learning needs register. This figure is similar to the national average (22.9%). One point four per cent (1.4%) of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is lower than the national figure (2.2%).

The headteacher was appointed to the post in September 2017. The senior management team has been reorganised recently. It now includes the headteacher, one deputy headteacher, two assistant headteachers and two associate assistant headteachers.

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 Gyfun Gwynllyw is a close-knit community that provides suitable care and support for its pupils. Overall, the supportive ethos ensures that many pupils attend regularly and feel safe at the school.

Over the last four years, the school's leaders, including the governing body, have not shown the ability to ensure the necessary improvement. They have not provided clear enough guidance to staff on how to maintain or raise standards, or ensure teaching of a consistently good quality. The school does not self-evaluate accurately or rigorously. This includes analysing performance data and evaluating standards of learning and the quality of teaching.

Shortcomings in many teachers' planning mean that pupils, on the whole, do not make enough progress in their lessons. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.

The school does not plan carefully enough to develop pupils' skills, particularly literacy. There are very few opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills in relevant subjects other than mathematics. Opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills are limited across subjects.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Improve standards, particularly the standards of boys and more able pupils
- R2 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment
- R3 Improve provision to develop pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT)
- R4 Improve the quality and effect of leadership at all levels
- R5 Improve the rigour and effectiveness of quality improvement processes

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will produce an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection. Estyn will monitor the school's progress every term.

Main findings

Standards: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

In their lessons, a majority of pupils recall previous learning appropriately and around half of pupils make suitable progress in terms of developing their subject skills. A few pupils make strong progress and deepen their understanding skilfully. Pupils' achievement in most indicators in key stage 4 have declined significantly over the last four years, and is notably lower than performance in similar schools.

In many lessons, pupils listen attentively to their teachers and to other pupils' views. When given an opportunity, a minority of pupils respond enthusiastically to the teacher's questions and contribute effectively to class discussions. For example, in religious education, pupils express themselves articulately when discussing religious attitudes towards issues relating to family relationships. However, a majority of pupils have a tendency to be reticent and offer brief, limited answers when they are questioned by teachers.

A majority of pupils read aloud confidently and meaningfully. They find facts successfully when reading texts, for example in their English lessons, when explaining how Lewis Hamilton became a famous and successful racing driver. A minority of pupils show effective higher order reading skills, for example when analysing content and style features in texts and explaining their effect on the reader.

On the whole, a majority of pupils have control of their writing, and use paragraphs and present their ideas coherently. Around half of pupils develop independent writing skills effectively, for example in history when dealing with Henry VIII's religious tenets. Many pupils' work is littered with language errors.

Across the age range, around half of pupils use their number skills confidently. A minority of pupils are unsure of their multiplication tables or when multiplying and dividing whole numbers and decimals. Very few pupils apply their number skills effectively in order to solve everyday problems. Many pupils collect data and produce suitable graphs, for example to show the distance that pupils travel to school, but only a minority use the graphs to form a conclusion.

A majority of pupils do not develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills well enough across the curriculum.

On the whole, pupils develop their creative and physical skills appropriately, for example when working together in small groups to produce an original script and perform it in drama lessons.

A few pupils show effective thinking skills. For example, in English, pupils apply their previous learning to interpret evidence in an unfamiliar situation when thinking about objects that were discovered on a remote island.

Pupils' performance in key stage 4 has declined annually over the last four years, and is lower than the performance of pupils in similar schools in most indicators in key stage 4. Pupils' achievement in the capped points score has been lower than in

similar schools for the last four years. Pupils' performance in the level 1 and 2 indicators has been consistently lower than that of similar schools over the same period. In the level 2 indicator that includes Welsh or English and mathematics, pupils' performance has been notably lower than in similar schools over the last three years. The proportion of pupils who gain five GCSE grades A*-A or equivalent has declined significantly since 2015 and, in 2018, is notably lower than in similar schools.

Over the last four years, boys' performance has declined in most indicators in key stage 4, and has been lower than the performance of boys in similar schools in most indicators over the last three years. On the whole, girls' performance has been similar to the performance of girls in similar schools over time. However, their performance in 2018 is weaker than that of girls in similar schools in nearly all indicators.

The performance of pupils who are eligible for free schools meals has varied over time. Their performance is either similar to, or better than, that of their peers in similar schools in a majority of indicators, and better in Welsh in three of the last four years. Only a few pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) gain a level 2 qualification in the core subjects.

No pupil has left the school without a qualification over the last four years.

In the sixth form, performance in the wider points score and the proportion of pupils who gain three A*-C grades has been strong over time and is better than performance in similar schools in three of the last four years. The school's performance in the level 3 threshold has declined over the last three years, but remains similar to that of similar schools. The proportion of pupils who gain three A*-A grades or equivalent has strengthened over time and is similar to performance in similar schools.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Many pupils feel safe and know who they can approach if they need help. They feel that the school deals well with any incidents of bullying. Many pupils behave well during lessons, assemblies and around the school. On the whole, pupils treat teachers, visitors and peers with due respect. During the inspection, a very few pupils were seen to be misbehaving and disrupting their own learning and that of other pupils. A majority of pupils feel that other pupils do not behave well enough in the classroom or during break time and lunchtime.

In lessons, most pupils arrive punctually, settle quickly and are ready to learn. A majority show an interest in their work and take pride in what they achieve. However, a minority of pupils are too passive in lessons and do not show resilience or perseverance in applying themselves to their work. When given an opportunity, many pupils develop beneficial social skills by working in pairs or small groups.

Many pupils develop a beneficial understanding of how to make healthy choices in terms of diet and physical activity. Around half of pupils benefit from taking part regularly in a variety of extra-curricular physical activities, such as rugby, netball, dance and gymnastics. They also take advantage of a wide range of cultural and artistic activities, including a recent popular musical and a public speaking competition.

Many pupils support various charities enthusiastically. This develops their social skills and life skills well. For example, they raise money for local and national charities, such as a local cancer hospital and Children in Need.

A few pupils undertake leadership roles and responsibilities purposefully, by contributing to committees that relate to a variety of issues, such as tolerance and health and wellbeing. For example, they raise awareness of gender equality and support initiatives that are beneficial to the mental health of their peers. Many pupils are developing successfully as ethical, knowledgeable and tolerant citizens.

Although the school council and its sub-committees work diligently, their efforts have not had enough of an effect on improving aspects of the school's life and work. Around half of pupils feel that the school does not listen to their views or act on them.

Attendance rates have improved over time and, in 2018, the school's performance was better than that of similar schools. However, the percentage of persistent absences has increased significantly over the last three years. The attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals has decreased over the same period.

Teaching and learning experiences: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

In a few cases, teachers plan purposefully to ensure progress in pupils' subject knowledge, based on their previous achievement. Challenging, purposeful targets are set that stimulate learning. In these teachers' lessons, pupils make strong progress. Shortcomings in many teachers' planning mean that pupils do not make enough progress in their subject skills. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Shortcomings include setting monotonous tasks that do not succeed in engaging pupils' interest or provide enough challenge. This has an adverse effect on the standards that pupils' achieve, including those who are more able.

Many teachers foster an appropriate working relationship with their pupils and succeed in creating a supportive environment in their classes. They usually make appropriate use of visual and digital resources to support their teaching.

In around half of lessons, teachers communicate clearly, model language correctly and give appropriate presentations and explanations. In other lessons, teachers do not set clear enough criteria or explain the requirements of tasks in enough detail. Too often, there are language errors in their oral and written presentations.

In many lessons, teaching does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking skills. In these lessons, teachers' presentations are excessive, they over-direct learning and do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to work together. As a result, pupils do not develop their ability to work independently adequately.

Many teachers walk around their classrooms to check the quality of pupils' work and provide suitable comments. In the few best cases, comments are purposeful and incisive, and show pupils clearly how to improve their work. However, too often, teachers give too much praise to work of an ordinary standard, and do not give pupils enough guidance on how to raise the standard of their work.

In a minority of cases, teachers question skilfully and probingly to probe and extend pupils' understanding. This has a positive effect on pupils' ability to think intensely and solve problems. However, teachers' effectiveness when asking questions is too varied within and across the subjects.

Many teachers provide useful feedback when identifying strengths and weaknesses in particular pieces of pupils' work in their books. Overall, pupils respond to this advice in a satisfactory way. However, teachers' comments on other pieces of pupils' work are superficial, too generous and do not provide pupils with enough guidance on how to improve their work.

The curriculum meets statutory needs and the school provides a suitable variety of courses and opportunities for learners. Leaders consult with pupils and respond appropriately to their wishes. The school has recently increased the range of options for pupils in key stage 4 and the sixth form appropriately, in order to meet the needs of specific groups of leaders and local employment needs. This includes a greater number of relevant occupational courses, for example hospitality, catering and care courses. The school provides a suitable alternative education programme for pupils who are at risk of becoming disaffected in key stage 3.

The school works appropriately with partner primary schools to organise suitable transition activities, which ensure that learners settle successfully. However, arrangements to ensure continuity in terms of developing pupils' skills from key stage 2 to key stage 3 are not robust enough.

The school's provision to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is underdeveloped. The school does not plan carefully enough to develop pupils' skills progressively, particularly literacy. There are no opportunities for pupils to develop their oral skills, and there are very few opportunities to develop higher order reading skills in subjects other than Welsh and English. In a few subjects, teachers set rich, purposeful targets, which allow pupils to develop very sound writing skills. In many subjects, the structure of the worksheets that are provided by teachers limits opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills. There are very few opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills in suitable subjects other than mathematics. Opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills across the subjects are limited.

The school has a suitable intervention programme to support pupils with poor literacy and numeracy skills, but there are not robust enough arrangements in place to evaluate the effect of these programmes. Relevant programmes are provided to enrich pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the school, but leaders do not monitor the quality and effectiveness of this provision.

The school provides beneficial opportunities to develop pupils' Welsh language skills. Opportunities to celebrate pupils' Welshness and raise their awareness of Welsh traditions and heritage are appropriate. For example, beneficial visits are organised by well-known poets and musicians, Dydd Miwsig Cymru (Welsh Language Music Day) is celebrated and the school competes in local and national eisteddfodau.

The school provides an extensive programme of extra-curricular experiences that enrich pupils' experiences, such as sports and performance activities. Pupils are

given valuable opportunities to improve their Welsh through residential activities at the Urdd residential centre in Glan-llyn and visits to Tresaith. The school provides a variety of interesting trips abroad to support learning, for example history trips to Auschwitz and New York.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw is a close-knit community that offers suitable care and support for its pupils. Overall, the supportive ethos ensures that many pupils attend regularly and feel safe at school. However, the care, support and guidance that are provided for pupils have not succeeded in addressing pupils' underachievement, particularly among boys, and aspects of attendance.

The school has recently established a beneficial system to track academic progress. Leaders use this information appropriately to identify pupils who are underachieving and organise suitable support. However, the school's arrangements for setting targets and tracking pupils' progress over the recent period have not been effective enough and have not led to raising standards at the end of key stage 4. The school's targets are too low and do not convey enough ambition when considering the school's position in comparison with similar schools.

The school tracks pupils' attendance consistently and works effectively with parents, on the whole, in order to ensure regular attendance. As a result, whole-school attendance has increased over the last four years. However, over the same period, the attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals has declined, and the percentage of pupils who are absent persistently has increased.

There is appropriate provision to identify and support pupils with additional learning needs. Overall, individual education plans and the staff handbook share beneficial information in order to plan and provide for individuals' needs. However, the school does not implement its arrangements to track the progress of these pupils against their individual targets consistently enough.

The 'Hafan' centre provides beneficial support for pupils who are experiencing emotional, medical and social difficulties. During break time and lunchtime, the 'Clwb Cwtsh' provides a safe place where vulnerable pupils can take advantage of valuable opportunities to socialise and relax. The school works appropriately with a suitable range of agencies and partners to provide for pupils with profound needs.

There is an appropriate link with other partner schools in order to ensure care and support, and facilitate arrangements for additional learning needs as pupils transfer from key stage 2 to key stage 3.

The school has revised reports for parents purposefully over the last year. Full reports include relevant information about strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work. Overall, targets that are identified for pupils' progress over time are not challenging enough.

The school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their awareness of a healthy lifestyle. For example, suitable units of work in the mindfulness and wellbeing programme for key stage 3 deal with valid aspects of keeping fit and

healthy. There are also valuable extra-curricular activities in sports such as rugby, netball, dance and gymnastics. The school has appropriate arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily, and pupils are given suitable opportunities to influence the food that is served in the canteen.

The school has suitable arrangements for its pupils' moral, social and cultural development. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to undertake responsibilities in the school through a network of seven sub-councils, for example the 'Cyngor Cymreictod' (Welshness Council) and eco council. However, the sub-councils have not had a sufficient effect on the school's work. There are very few opportunities for pupils to make decisions about their own learning.

There are valuable opportunities for pupils to increase their awareness of their own culture. These include taking part in a musical, eisteddfodau and visits to Glan-llyn and Tresaith to promote Welshness. The school also provides beneficial experiences of the wider world. Within the curriculum in Year 9, the history of Berlin is studied, and aspects of the environment are studied in geography. There is a range of purposeful extra-curricular visits, including to New York and Auschwitz. The school provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to take part in creative activities, including the musical lunchtime clubs, eisteddfod activities and choir concerts.

The school provides a suitable programme of personal and social education, for example through the mindfulness and wellbeing lessons in key stage 3. The school has effective provision to promote a culture of tolerance and respect, which includes working with external organisations to produce a film on issues relating to sexuality and the 'Munud i Feddwl' (Pause for Thought) presentations every morning.

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

Leadership and management: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Over the last four years, leadership and management at all levels have not succeeded in maintaining or ensuring improvement in important aspects of the school's work. During the last eighteen months, the headteacher has created a clearer management structure by revising the roles and responsibilities of members of the senior leadership team. However, the senior leadership team has not provided clear enough guidance to staff on setting high expectations in terms of raising pupils' standards and improving the quality of teaching. They have also not ensured enough progress in terms of achieving national priorities, including planning in line with the literacy and numeracy framework.

On the whole, middle leaders do not undertake their roles efficiently or understand their responsibilities in enough detail in terms of ensuring improvement. Subject leaders' understanding and effectiveness, in terms of ensuring high standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning within their areas of responsibility, are too varied. Heads of progress have recently expanded their role appropriately to include responsibility for pupils' academic progress, in addition to pastoral issues. It is too early to see the effect of this strategy.

A clear line management structure and calendar of regular meetings between leaders are beginning to increase the accountability of middle leaders. Although there are actions following a majority of these meetings, discussions do not focus enough on the quality of teaching or developing pupils' skills.

Performance management arrangements enable leaders to identify individuals' training needs appropriately. However, in many cases, personal targets do not place enough emphasis on improving the quality of teaching. Overall, targets relating to pupils' performance are not measurable or ambitious enough. As a result, the process is not rigorous enough to hold staff to account successfully.

The governing body is very supportive of the school and the senior leadership team. It is developing its role as a critical friend and beginning to challenge the senior team on the school's performance. Members of the governing body have a suitable understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, historically, they have not challenged the school adequately in relation to key areas of underperformance, for example standards in key stage 4 and the quality of teaching. In the past, they have not held senior or middle leaders to account rigorously enough.

The school has recently adapted and improved its self-evaluation systems. Staff and leaders have agreed a purposeful calendar, which outlines activities and important dates. Activities include useful processes to monitor pupils' work and the standard of teaching. As a result, expectations are clear to all. However, the processes are fairly new and have not had time to have an effect on raising standards in key stage 4 or the quality of teaching across all subjects.

As a result of the changes to quality assurance systems, the school's senior leadership team has an appropriate understanding of the school's performance, including pupils' standards and the standard of teaching. It is also beginning to use these findings appropriately in order to identify priorities for improvement.

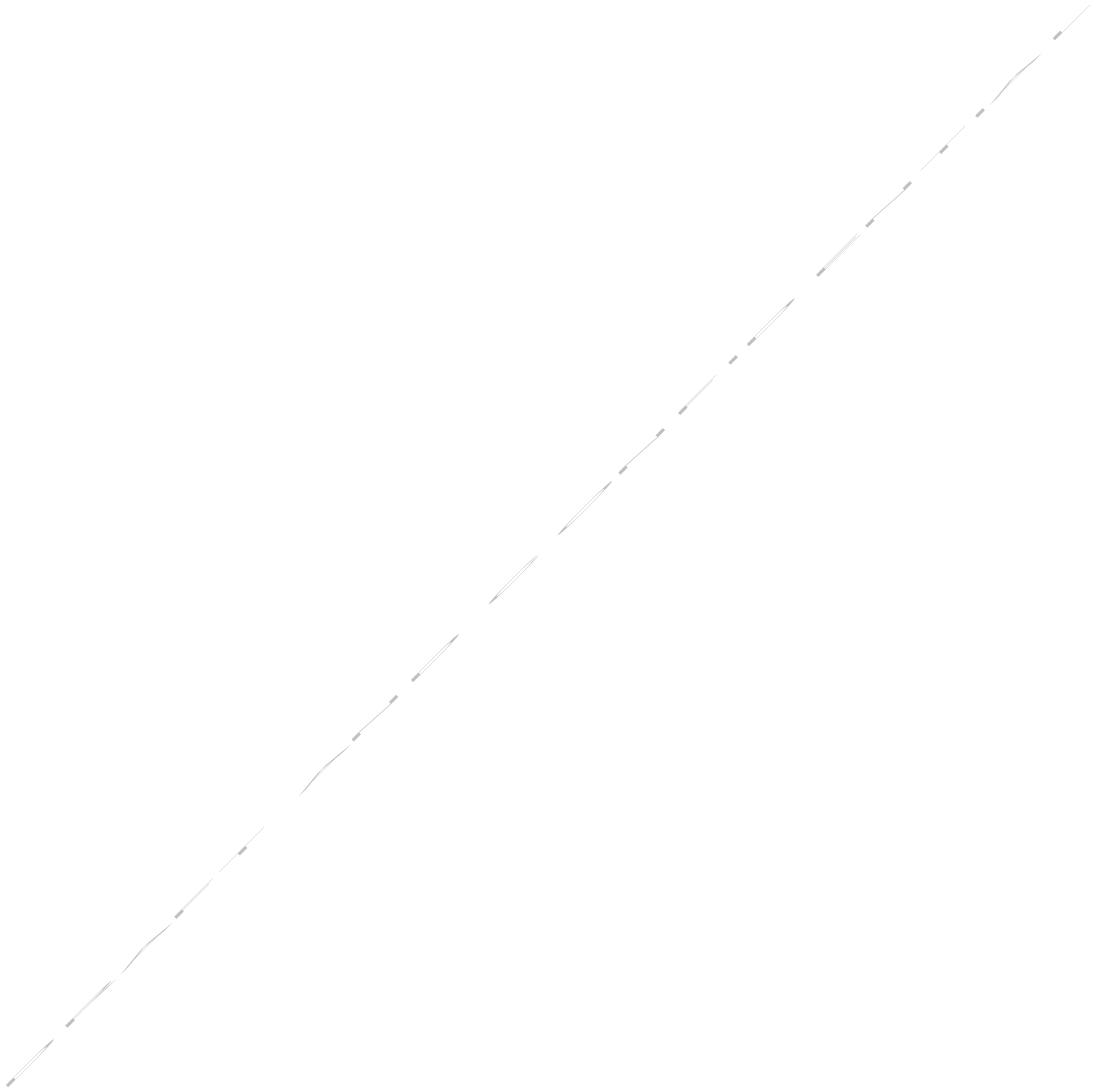
Outcomes from departmental self-evaluation processes are too varied in terms of detail and usefulness. On the whole, subject leaders do not analyse performance data in enough detail, for example they do not consider their pupils' performance in comparison with that of pupils in similar schools. Middle leaders do not make enough use of information from self-evaluation processes to raise pupils' standards and the standard of teaching. For example, they do not analyse data in enough detail to identify groups of pupils who are underachieving. The school does not evaluate teaching and learning in detail and, when planning improvement, does not give enough attention to developing pedagogy across departments.

Leaders have not prioritised the professional development of members of the school's staff appropriately. Although whole-school training covers suitable areas, leaders do not plan this training strategically enough. There is no clear link between training areas and the shortcomings that have been identified through self-evaluation processes. There are no definite arrangements to monitor the effect of training on the quality of teaching.

The headteacher, bursar and governing body sub-committee monitor funding carefully. The school is staffed appropriately and nearly all teachers teach within their area of expertise. Administrative and support staff are used effectively to

support teachers and pupils. There are high levels of absence among staff, and the extensive use of supply teachers has had a negative effect on the quality of teaching and learning.

The effect of the pupil development grant is inconsistent. Over time, it has not led to consistent enough improvements in the attendance and performance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals.



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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