



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

A report on

**Ysgol Gymraeg Y Gwernant
Pengwern
Llangollen
LL20 8AR**

Date of inspection: June 2019

by

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

About Ysgol Gymraeg y Gwernant

Ysgol Gymraeg y Gwernant is situated in the town of Llangollen in Denbighshire local authority. There are 142 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including 16 part-time nursery pupils. The school shares a site with an English-medium primary school.

Over a three-year-period, slightly below 10% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. This is lower than the national percentage of 19%. Around 4% of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes and very few are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The school has identified around 21% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, which is the same as the national percentage. Welsh is the main medium of teaching and learning, and the aim is to ensure that all pupils are fluent in Welsh and English by the end of key stage 2.

The headteacher was appointed to the post in September 2005 and the school was last inspected in January 2013.

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 school is a happy, caring and inclusive community with a clear focus on promoting excellent standards in terms of pupils' wellbeing. A strong feature of provision is the way in which the pupil's voice is included fully when making decisions about what happens at the school. As a result, nearly all pupils have strong attitudes to learning and show pride in their school.

One of the school's strengths is the way in which staff work together highly effectively and successfully to forge and maintain an excellent working relationship with pupils. Pupils' behaviour is excellent and nearly all pupils treat each other and adults with a high level of respect and courtesy. Exciting experiences motivate and support pupils very successfully.

The school has a very strong Welsh ethos, and provision encourages pupils to make full use of the Welsh language in all aspects of its life and work. As a result, nearly all pupils take pride in their bilingualism, culture and Welsh heritage.

The headteacher provides extremely robust leadership. She has a passionate and clear vision to develop the school as an inclusive and stimulating community for pupils. All staff are dedicated and enthusiastic, and work closely together highly effectively as a team. This leads to a strong learning community, where staff face changes and current developments in education enthusiastically and confidently.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Raise pupils' standards of numeracy as they apply their skills across the curriculum
- R2 Ensure consistently good opportunities for pupils to write at length independently

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to the adventurous and exciting provision that improves pupils' wellbeing and attitudes to learning, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

During their time at the school, most pupils make sound progress from their starting points. They build on previous learning effectively and apply their thinking skills successfully across a range of areas of learning. Pupils with additional learning needs make excellent progress against their targets.

In both key stages, most pupils listen attentively to adults and each other. They pay attention in the classroom and treat each other with respect when discussing their work or listening to ideas. At the beginning of the foundation phase, most pupils make strong progress in their oral skills, considering their linguistic backgrounds. By the end of the phase, most use an increasing range of vocabulary successfully in various situations, for example when speaking confidently about the features of a good story and the author's intentions. Across key stage 2, most pupils speak with a good level of accuracy, express an opinion and ask questions maturely. For example, they discuss sensibly how they can design a special aeroplane for an international company.

Most pupils' reading skills are developing very well across the school. Most pupils in the foundation phase have good knowledge of letter sounds and use their knowledge beneficially to read unfamiliar texts confidently. By the end of the foundation phase, most are confident readers. They read freely and vary their tone of voice and characterisation effectively. Across key stage 2, most pupils are fluent readers in both languages. They use their reading skills highly effectively to gather relevant information from appropriate websites to enrich their work across the curriculum. For example, they have researched information about lifesaving equipment in order to produce a pamphlet for local residents.

Many pupils show continuous development in terms of their writing skills. By the end of the foundation phase, most pupils spell polysyllabic words confidently and choose words to create effect. For example, they use imperative verbs soundly when writing the main rules of road safety. In key stage 2, many pupils build successfully on their writing skills in both languages. They adapt style and structure to different texts appropriately, for example when producing an attractive and purposeful website about Wales. However, many pupils do not write extensively enough in a range of genres.

Most pupils' numeracy skills are developing well. In the foundation phase, most handle money correctly, for example when buying ice cream in the reception class. In Year 2, most pupils have a sound understanding of measurement and weight, for example when building a special boat for a fictional character. In key stage 2, most pupils build well on their previous learning. They have a sound understanding of number facts. For example, Year 4 pupils use percentages successfully to calculate the price of goods that are in a sale in the shop. By Year 6, most pupils understand the need to use different graphs to convey various information effectively. For example, they create a line graph to show the effect of exercise on heart rate. However, pupils do not apply their numeracy skills consistently to the same high level in cross-curricular activities as they do in mathematics lessons.

Most pupils make effective use of their information and communication technology (ICT) skills to support their work across the curriculum. From a young age, pupils use different apps purposefully, for example when creating a pictogram of their favourite animals. By the end of the foundation phase, most pupils use the internet confidently, for example to gather information about astronauts. In key stage 2, many pupils create a database successfully in order to compile key information about countries such as Brazil. By Year 6, most weave a range of digital skills capably to create multimedia presentations. For example, they have created a website about Wales. Their understanding of e-safety is sound.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Nearly all pupils appreciate the fact that their voice is at the heart of all of the school's activities, and that there is a wide variety of opportunities for them to express an opinion on the different councils and committees. Pupils share their priorities effectively with stakeholders and lead different initiatives highly successfully. For example, members of the school council have produced a useful video to train the 'Bydis Buarth' (Playground Buddies) to support pupils' wellbeing. A strong feature of the work of these councils is the way in which they come together to lead on specific initiatives. For example, they have organised an eco and wellbeing day for the whole school, and have also worked together to monitor the use of plastic in their peers' lunchboxes. Members work very confidently with external agencies on specific projects. These include meeting with representatives from the town's different businesses in order to encourage them to promote the Welsh language within their establishments. Nearly all pupils are proud of their Welshness and the fact that they speak Welsh.

Nearly all pupils have an extremely sound understanding of the importance of drinking water, eating healthily and taking part in physical activities. This is reinforced richly as they take part in a wide range of physical activities that are organised by staff or members of the healthy schools council. Members of this council promote fitness excellently and encourage their fellow pupils to keep fit by taking part in different fun activities. For example, they lead a whole-school dance session after break time. Nearly all pupils have a very sound understanding of how to stay safe online. This is supported very effectively by the digital leaders, who produce presentations and hold highly successfully workshops for the school's stakeholders.

Nearly all pupils behave exceptionally well and treat each other and adults with a very high level of respect and courtesy. They greet each other, staff and visitors in a very friendly, natural and genial way. Nearly all pupils are proud of their school and contribute very actively towards creating the caring and homely ethos that permeates all aspects of its work. A strong feature is the way in which pupils support each other in lessons and on the playground. The 'Gweld pedwar cyn fi' ('Ask four before me') scheme ensures that nearly all pupils in key stage 2 are responsible for different aspects in their classes. They provide support for their peers in various activities, such as correcting language or solving ICT problems. This contributes very successfully towards creating a sense of team and self-confidence among pupils.

Nearly all pupils are very aware of the importance of attending school regularly and punctually. They enjoy coming to school and are keen to take part in the wide range

of activities and rich learning experiences that are available to them. Nearly all pupils are highly enthusiastic and show healthy motivation and a very positive attitude to learning. They work confidently and effectively in pairs or groups and persevere to strive independently on tasks for extended periods. 'Amser Antur' ('Adventure Time'), when they are given a weekly opportunity to complete a range of adventurous activities, has a very positive effect on nearly all pupils' learning skills in key stage 2. As a result of this reward scheme, pupils are keen to complete tasks that they have started promptly and develop an increasing understanding of the value of working conscientiously. They start their work immediately rather than procrastinating, and take responsibility for their own learning by making sure that they complete homework on time and by persevering with tasks.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The curriculum that is provided by the school is effective. Plans are based on exciting themes that engage nearly all pupils' interest successfully. All themes begin with a purposeful stimulus, for example Cinderella's shoe appearing outside the Year 1 and 2 classroom, or aliens attacking the Year 6 class. Planning includes regular opportunities for pupils to choose what they would like to learn and decide the best method to record their work. As a result, most pupils apply themselves fully to their learning and take pride in their success. The curriculum is enriched effectively by conducting visits for pupils to places of interest, and by using the expertise of visitors, such as members of an international company, in order to set a challenge for pupils to design a special aeroplane. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their awareness and knowledge of different parts of the world and different cultures. Successful examples of this include how pupils responded to a rich task by coming to mature conclusions about the ideal country for a child from Africa. This ensures that pupils show empathy for the lives of other people and realise that not all children are as fortunate as them.

Planning to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is effective, on the whole. It includes rich opportunities for pupils to apply their skills through interesting activities across national curriculum subjects and the areas of learning in the foundation phase. The school's resources, including the outdoor areas, are used effectively and regularly in order to develop pupils' skills in a wide range of activities. For example, foundation phase teachers provide opportunities for pupils to design a magic potion in the wild garden, build a trailer in the creation area and perform various stories on the stage. Staff prepare attractive and purposeful resources to promote pupils' curiosity, which encourages them to develop as confident learners. However, learning experiences do not always give enough attention to improving pupils' extended writing skills or provide enough opportunities, across the curriculum, for them to apply their numeracy skills independently to the same level as in their mathematics work.

Rich opportunities that are provided to promote the Welsh language and Welshness are a completely core and natural part of all of the school's work. Teachers model language excellently and immerse pupils in polished Welsh at a very early stage. This is done successfully in the classrooms and around the school consistently. This provision strengthens all pupils' oracy skills successfully, particularly those to whom Welsh is a new language. Extra-curricular activities, such as the Urdd club and the sports club, contribute further towards developing pupils' language.

All staff know the pupils very well, and there is a highly constructive and supportive relationship between them across the school. This contributes successfully towards creating an environment in which pupils are very willing to work hard and do their best to complete tasks. Most teachers share clear lesson objectives and use various effective questioning techniques to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, success criteria, in terms of numeracy and extended writing tasks, are not specific enough to correspond to the full range of pupils' abilities.

Mature discussions between adults and pupils contribute successfully towards guiding the next steps in their learning. Teachers provide pupils with timely, meaningful and stimulating oral feedback. They also provide useful opportunities for pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers by promoting effective discussions in pairs. For example, 'CAM' is being introduced to pupils, which stands for 'amser cywiro, addasu a myfyrio' (correct, adapt and reflect). As a result, many pupils are beginning to improve aspects of their work effectively.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school is an extremely caring and friendly community that promotes the importance of pupils' excellent behaviour very successfully. A strong element of provision is the way in which all staff commit highly effectively to ensuring pupils' wellbeing, including their mental and physical health. Provision for all of the school's councils contributes exceptionally well towards the familial, caring and inclusive ethos. As a result, nearly all pupils feel safe, take pride in their school and show very positive attitudes towards their learning. The school provides a wide range of procedures that promote this excellently. One strong feature in this area is the weekly 'Amser Antur' (Adventure Time), which succeeds in motivating pupils to gain points for various aspects, such as working independently, persevering and celebrating their Welshness and self-confidence. As a result of its success, pupils take part in a variety of exciting, ambitious and interesting activities. This prepares them highly effectively to deal positively with life experiences in the future.

The school has very effective procedures to track and monitor pupils' progress and wellbeing. The procedure is easy to use and staff identify pupils' educational, emotional and social needs at an early stage. Teachers and assistants cater for them by providing them with a wide range of very successful intervention and support programmes. For example, the school provide regular play therapy sessions, which have a very positive influence on groups of children with emotional needs. As a result, nearly all pupils gain confidence in themselves and understand the importance of sharing their concerns with others. Staff know the pupils and their parents exceptionally well and have a very positive relationship with them.

Staff provide many appropriate opportunities for pupils to play an active part in decision-making and leadership. This is one of the school's strengths and includes a very active school council, eco council, super ambassadors, healthy schools council that is known as SNAG, digital leaders and the Welsh Language Charter crew. The school council focuses effectively on aspects of pupils' wellbeing, such as reinforcing the role of the playground buddies and improving the school's play areas. The school has highly effective arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily, in addition to a wide range of physical activities for pupils. The healthy schools council leads activity sessions successfully to develop pupils' physical skills and increase

their levels of participation during the school day. For example, they lead a daily dance activity for pupils.

By implementing circle time sessions and wellbeing intervention periods for specific groups, the school implements an extremely valuable personal and social education programme. Class and whole-school assemblies and circle times also promote pupils' spiritual and moral development very effectively.

Teachers use local companies, visits to places of interest and visitors, such as artists, to stimulate interesting projects based on pupils' real lives. Provision to promote Welsh culture, the Welsh language and Welsh heritage is particularly effective. There are regular opportunities for pupils to perform at the school, in the local community and further afield, which develops their self-confidence, pride in themselves and their ability to work with others. Examples include competing in the Urdd Eisteddfod, performing musicals on stage at the Llangollen Pavilion and singing in services, such as 'Light Up a Life', to raise money for Nightingale House hospice.

The school has a very strong relationship with parents and keeps them well-informed about their children's progress. Arrangements include detailed progress reports and regular parents' evenings. The 'Annual Open Morning', which provides an opportunity for parents to visit the school during lessons, is very successful. It raises parents' awareness of how teachers teach aspects of the curriculum and is an opportunity for them to receive training on the school's digital resources and other matters. This helps parents to support their children's learning. The school's website and other social media platforms provide them with up-to-date and detailed information about the school's activities.

The school has suitable procedures to ensure that the site is secure. This includes working with the nearby school to manage safe access to the site. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Excellent

The headteacher provides very robust and effective leadership, which ensures a clear strategic direction for the school. She leads the school confidently and intelligently, and has a passionate and clear vision to develop the school as an inclusive and stimulating community for pupils, which is shared enthusiastically with staff and governors. The headteacher has been key to developing the school as a community that promotes Welshness, nurtures respect and encourages successful teamwork. Her skilful communication methods are a strong element of her leadership. She has a very productive relationship with staff, parents and governors. As a result, they work together highly successfully to raise all pupils' standards, ensure their wellbeing and promote their Welshness.

The school's management procedures and documents are very coherent and clear. As a result, staff have a sound understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and fulfil them highly effectively. Leaders at all levels are enthusiastic and support the headteacher excellently. They have committed to maintaining high quality provision by supporting and assisting teachers sensitively and supportively. They encourage and foster a positive and caring ethos of co-operation. This feature is one of the

school's particular strengths. Support staff are an integral part of this team and contribute very conscientiously towards improving pupils' standards and wellbeing.

Performance management arrangements are innovative and contribute very successfully towards staff's professional development. For example, teachers are given opportunities to create learning communities outside the school. They choose aspects for development, complete research, share good practice and create very useful presentations to be shared with other schools. This is beginning to have a positive effect on the way in which key stage 2 teachers plan to develop pupils' independent skills.

The school receives very good support from governors. They are dedicated and have a sound understanding of the quality of provision and standards. All members have a specific responsibility for aspects of the school development plan and monitor progress regularly. By conducting learning walks and receiving detailed reports from the headteacher, they have very thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They work purposefully as critical friends, and challenge the school and hold it to account for its performance very successfully.

The school has a history of ensuring highly effective continuous improvement. The school's self-evaluation arrangements are very rigorous and are based on a wide range of reliable evidence. Staff contribute directly to these arrangements by standardising and moderating pupils' work and monitoring the quality of provision regularly. As a result, they have a robust and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The link between the self-evaluation report's findings and the priorities in the development plan is clear. Actions to address priorities inform the school's work very successfully. This leads to improvement in several areas, which include improving the mathematics skills of girls in key stage 2.

Leaders respond successfully to national and local priorities. For example, they have introduced effective strategies recently to implement the Welsh Language Charter. This is having a very positive effect on pupils' standards of oracy and reading.

The school is staffed very appropriately and good use is made of individuals' expertise to enrich pupils' learning experiences. For example, specialists among the support staff are used effectively to promote pupils' fitness and wellbeing. The outdoor and indoor learning areas are attractive and enrich pupils' learning experiences very successfully. Staff use all resources successfully to support pupils' learning and wellbeing. They have created a stimulating learning environment where staff enjoy teaching and pupils are eager to learn.

The headteacher and governors manage the school's funding carefully. Decisions on expenditure correspond clearly with the priorities for improvement and meet pupils' needs successfully. Leaders use the pupil development grant prudently to ensure wellbeing and raise standards of reading and numeracy among pupils who are eligible for free school meals. As a result, all eligible pupils make good progress and are given full access to all of the school's activities.

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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Publication date: 05/08/2019