



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

A report on

**Ysgol Gymuned Llanfechell
Llanfechell
Amlwch
LL68 0SA**

Date of inspection: February 2020

by

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

About Ysgol Gymuned Llanfechell

Ysgol Gymuned Llanfechell is situated on the outskirts of the village in the north of Anglesey. Pupils come from the village and the surrounding rural area. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work. There are 70 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including eight nursery age pupils. The school has three mixed-age classes.

Over the last three years, around 18% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals, which is equal to the national percentage. Around 75% of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. The school has identified around 10% of its pupils as having special educational needs. This is significantly lower than the national percentage of 12%.

The school was last inspected in June 2014 and the acting headteacher has been in post since September 2019.

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 welcoming and inclusive community that fosters a supportive and diligent learning environment for pupils. An excellent feature is the familial ethos that exists to ensure that pupils and staff care for each other naturally. As a result, nearly all pupils enjoy the school's life and work, behave very well and have positive attitudes to learning.

Teachers provide rich and interesting learning experiences for pupils, which meet most of their needs well and, as a result, during their time at the school, many make sound progress from their starting points. However, at times, staff's expectations of what pupils are able to achieve are not consistent. As a result, activities are not always challenging enough to ensure that all pupils develop as independent learners and achieve to the best of their ability.

The acting headteacher has a clear vision for the school and high expectations for the wellbeing and achievement of all pupils. She has conveyed this vision successfully to staff, governors and parents. In the short time since being appointed, she has identified the school's strengths and main areas for improvement well. However, over time, monitoring procedures have not been rigorous enough, and leaders have not acted quickly enough to address important areas for improvement.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that all teachers challenge pupils to achieve to the best of their ability
- R2 Ensure regular opportunities for all pupils in the foundation phase to make choices about their learning and develop independent learning skills
- R3 Improve pupils' Welsh oral skills
- R4 Improve aspects of pupils' ICT skills
- R5 Strengthen the school's monitoring procedures and improvement plans to focus firmly on improving pupils' outcomes

What happens next

The school will produce an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Good

As they move through the school, many pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress from their starting points. However, at times, a few more able pupils' progress is limited.

Many pupils' communication skills in the foundation phase are developing well. Most listen attentively in plenary sessions and respond enthusiastically to teachers' questions as they undertake tasks. Many pupils in key stage 2 contribute effectively to class discussions. By Year 6, many pupils speak accurately in Welsh and develop as competent and confident learners. However, across the school, lack of vocabulary and clumsy syntax impair a few pupils' confidence in communicating confidently when discussing their work. At the top of the school, most pupils communicate confidently in English and discuss their work intelligently and maturely, by using extensive and rich vocabulary, for example when discussing the working conditions of poor children during the Victorian era.

In the foundation phase, many pupils develop their early reading skills effectively. They use an appropriate range of phonic strategies confidently to build unfamiliar words. By Year 2, many read from their work with a sound understanding. They discuss the main events in a story and express an opinion about what they have read. Most pupils in key stage 2 make sound progress in their reading in Welsh and English. They discuss the content of text meaningfully and refer sensibly to events and characters in the books that they read. By Year 6, many practise their higher order reading skills regularly and maturely to gather information from different sources, including reference books and the internet, for example when learning about how animals adapt to their habitat.

Most pupils' early writing skills are developing well. By the end of the foundation phase, many write confidently in a variety of genres, for example when recounting the story of Mary Jones and her Bible, or when presenting factual information about birds that can be seen in the local area. By Year 6, most pupils present their ideas effectively. They show a sound awareness of the features of a wide range of different genres, for example when writing about the experiences of children in schools around the world. They draft and re-draft their work effectively and show a sound grasp of spelling patterns, paragraphing and punctuation in both languages. Many pupils' handwriting and presentation of work are neat.

Most pupils in the foundation phase make sound progress in their mathematical development. Many show a good understanding of number strategies and use them confidently to solve problems across the areas of learning, by handling money correctly when role-playing in the class post office, or when helping Rala Rwdins in the ice-cream parlour. Most pupils in key stage 2 build well on their previous learning and, by Year 6, they recall number facts quickly and use a wide range of methods confidently to complete mental calculations and recording methods. They apply them successfully to solve problems, for example when discovering how much money they can save by buying goods in a sale. They apply what they have learned in mathematics lessons confidently to everyday situations, for example when using the scale on a map to organise a walking bus to school.

Many pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills develop gradually as they move through the school. In the foundation phase, many use an electronic tablet effectively to record their work, and use word-processing programs with increasing confidence to present information, for example about the importance of taking care of our world. In key stage 2, many research safely online, for example to support their work on the animals of the rainforest. They use suitable commercial packages to produce multimedia presentations of their work. However, across the school, very few pupils develop a good understanding of how to handle data or create spreadsheets to model real-life situations.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils enjoy school and feel safe within its caring, inclusive and supportive ethos. They know whom to approach for advice if anything is worrying them, and are confident that staff respond promptly to any concerns they may have. They are welcoming, polite and very courteous towards each other, staff and visitors, and respect their school and their community. One of the school's excellent features is the very kind and affectionate way in which many of the older pupils care for younger pupils during break time and lunchtime. Nearly all pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They move quietly and calmly around the school.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are ready to learn, show motivation in their work and apply themselves diligently to their tasks. Many develop as enthusiastic and hard-working learners who work together in harmony and stay on task for extended periods. At the top of the school, nearly all pupils concentrate well and show resilience when facing new challenges. They show an interest and pride in their work, and make regular decisions about how and what they learn. Most show maturity when evaluating what they have achieved and identify what they need to do to improve their work.

The pupil's voice, through the work of the school's committees, is developing appropriately. Pupils are beginning to undertake their work as members of the school council, and show a good understanding of their roles in representing the views of others within the school community. Pupils respond enthusiastically to opportunities that they are given to develop aspects of the school's work. A good example of this is the work of the eco council in working with a naturalist to develop the outdoor area.

There are close links between the school and the local community. Nearly all pupils take part in a number of activities, for example in the community cafe, and socialise with the elderly in the village to learn about the area's history. As a result, pupils broaden their knowledge and understanding of their local area intelligently and develop as moral and conscientious citizens. Pupils contribute regularly to fundraising activities for charities and contribute to the local food bank. This has a positive effect on their understanding of other people's needs.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of eating and drinking healthily, and take part in regular exercise. They take part enthusiastically in a range of sports activities within the school and in extra-curricular clubs, which has a positive effect on their wellbeing and fitness. Many pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of staying safe online.

Most pupils are aware of the importance of attending school regularly, and attendance rates have increased over the last two years. However, in comparison with similar schools, pupils' attendance rates have placed the school slightly below the average over the last three years.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Staff forge a close working relationship with pupils, which has a positive effect on their standards and wellbeing. They know the pupils well and provide them with effective support while they work and interact with their peers.

Teachers provide a varied range of valuable learning experiences for pupils, which engage their interest and meet most pupils' needs successfully. They plan cross-curricular themes that promote learning and, on the whole, support pupils' knowledge and understanding successfully. The principles of the foundation phase have been embedded firmly in the youngest class in the foundation phase. There is a clear emphasis on nurturing pupils' independence and developing their skills by providing practical and stimulating experiences for them. As a result, pupils have the confidence to try and to think for themselves from a very young age. Teachers provide appropriate focus tasks for older pupils in the foundation phase, but opportunities for them to develop their independent skills through continuous activities are limited. Adults often over-direct activities and, as a result, limit the opportunities for pupils to make specific choices about their learning. Very little use is made of the outdoor area to develop these pupils' creative and physical skills.

In key stage 2, teachers provide a range of valuable learning experiences that meet many pupils' needs successfully. In a majority of classes, in which teaching is most effective, teachers prepare stimulating tasks that respond to all pupils' needs, and teachers' presentations engage pupils' interest well. Teachers remind pupils effectively about their previous learning and present them with clear learning objectives and instructions. They ensure increasing and valuable opportunities for pupils to make important decisions in relation to their work. This has a very positive effect on their attitudes to learning. Teachers use open-ended questions effectively, which enables pupils to elaborate and explain their answers sensibly, for example as they explain how they set about solving problems. As a result, pupils have the confidence to make attempts and to undertake tasks enthusiastically and independently. However, at times, staff's expectations of what pupils are able to achieve are not consistent in all classes. As a result, activities are not always challenging enough to ensure that all pupils achieve to the best of their ability.

Teachers provide effective opportunities for pupils to learn about the features of their area, in addition to Welsh history and culture, by providing them with a range of beneficial activities at school and by organising suitable visits to places of interest. A good example of this is the work of older pupils in key stage 2 on the features of the area of outstanding natural beauty at Cemlyn Bay. The school takes advantage of every opportunity to use the expertise of visitors to enrich pupils' experiences. By organising for members of the community who are former pupils to discuss their school experiences with the current pupils, teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about how children's school experiences have changed over time. Following a visit to Llynnon Mill in the company of a poet, pupils have been stimulated to develop their writing skills effectively by composing their own poems.

This develops pupils' writing skills effectively, and promotes their awareness of their local area and Welsh culture successfully.

Provision to develop the Welsh language enables many pupils to make good progress in learning the language and using it in different contexts. On the whole, staff model accurate spoken language for pupils in Welsh, in lessons and at other times. However, they do not take advantage of opportunities to refine and enrich pupils' spoken language regularly enough. Teachers plan effectively to develop pupils' reading and writing skills and, as a result, they use them confidently across the curriculum. Teachers ensure regular opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum. As a result, many pupils transfer and apply these skills confidently, for example when calculating the cost of building a school in Africa. However, planning to develop pupils' ICT skills does not ensure enough opportunities for pupils across the school to apply the full range of skills regularly.

Recently, the school has strengthened its use of assessment for learning strategies. Teachers intervene sensitively to support pupils at appropriate times during lessons, and many provide valuable feedback to enable them to make improvements and develop their work further. Pupils at the top of the school are given regular opportunities to reflect on their work and make improvements. As a result, by Year 6, many pupils take responsibility for their own work and progress, and discuss this intelligently. However, this practice is not consistent across the school.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a caring and familial community that promotes good behaviour, courtesy and respect highly effectively. The supportive and friendly working relationship between staff and pupils is a strong feature of the school's work and promotes positive attitudes to learning. Staff celebrate individuals' personal successes regularly. They praise them publicly for their daily efforts with their homework in plenary sessions. As a result, pupils feel that they are valued, which helps to develop their self-confidence and self-respect.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. By reflecting in collective worship sessions and learning about the principles of various religions, staff provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to experience spiritual and moral aspects. The school provides valuable opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to develop their understanding of human rights. As a result, most pupils develop as moral and knowledgeable individuals. The school is very active in the village and the wider community, and encourages pupils regularly to show pride in their school and their local community. A good example of this is the numerous visits to Caffi Mechell in order to contribute to community activities to enrich pupils' experiences. These various links strengthen pupils' sense of belonging to the community, and develops their knowledge and understanding of their local area.

Provision to develop pupils' creative and expressive skills is effective. Extensive use is made of visitors, such as poets, musicians and authors, to enrich pupils' creative experiences. A good example of this is a local author's recent visit to work with the youngest pupils to develop their understanding of how to write a creative story. Visits such as dance companies to nurture pupils' performance skills contribute

successfully towards boosting many pupils' self-confidence and their ability to work together effectively.

The school has effective procedures to track pupils' progress. Teachers use the information that derives from these procedures effectively to identify pupils' additional learning needs and personal needs at an early stage, and provide them with timely and purposeful support. However, this information is not always used in full to ensure that more able children always achieve to an appropriate standard. Provision to support pupils with special educational needs or additional learning needs is good. Assistants work skilfully and conscientiously to implement a wide range of purposeful intervention programmes for them. A good example of this is the successful intervention that is used to develop the ability of a specific group of pupils to recall multiplication tables in mathematics. This has a positive effect on their progress. All pupils with additional learning needs have a purposeful individual education plan. These plans are reviewed regularly with pupils, teachers and parents. As a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points. The school has valuable links with external agencies in order to support pupils and provide further support and guidance for staff and parents.

The school establishes productive relationships with parents. Parents are informed regularly through letters, text messages and social media about the school's activities and events, in addition to the termly themes. They appreciate the open-door policy, which ensures that they are able to raise any issues that may affect their child's learning and wellbeing in a timely manner. As a result, parents feel that they are part of the school and work effectively with staff. Recently, the school has changed the system of providing homework to ensure a range of tasks that provide valuable opportunities for pupils to make choices about their learning. This contributes effectively towards pupils' willing commitment to their work, and ensures that parents are more aware of what they can do to support their children.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily. This includes a healthy fruit shop, which pupils help to run. The school provides a varied range of opportunities for pupils to take part in sports and physical activities, such as dance, gymnastics and orienteering, which contribute effectively towards developing their ability to work together and develop their fitness. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher, who was appointed recently, has a clear vision for the school, which has a firm focus on providing rich and interesting activities within a caring and familial ethos. She has high expectations for all pupils' wellbeing and achievement. She has conveyed this vision successfully to staff, governors and parents. In the short time since being appointed, the headteacher has come to know the school well. She is aware of its strengths and has identified key aspects for developing the school, which focus clearly on improving the quality of teaching and ensuring consistency in provision. She has already implemented a number of improvement strategies to improve safeguarding arrangements, strengthen the relationship with parents, and refine management procedures. This contributes successfully to pupils' wellbeing.

Staff are dedicated and work together closely as a team, and discharge their duties conscientiously to ensure that pupils' wellbeing is at the heart of their work. Dedicated assistants provide effective support, which has a significant influence on pupils' experiences, for example by providing reading and numeracy interventions, and enriching learning experiences.

Over time, the school has undertaken a suitable range of self-evaluation activities. These include analysing pupil performance data and scrutinising their work. Leaders use this information appropriately to identify the school's strengths and useful priorities for improvement, such as the need to improve pupils' spoken language in Welsh and develop agreed assessment for learning strategies. However, over time, monitoring has not been rigorous enough, and leaders have not acted quickly enough to address important areas for improvement, such as ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching and improving pupils' ICT skills.

The headteacher has begun to promote staff's professional development purposefully and has established appropriate arrangements to manage staff's performance. Teachers' improvement objectives link directly to the school's priorities and address staff's personal development needs. The headteacher has begun to provide purposeful opportunities for staff to share good practice within the school by scrutinising books jointly. This is already beginning to have a positive effect on the quality of teachers' feedback to their pupils and their use of assessment for learning strategies. However, it is too early to measure the effect of this strategy on pupils' outcomes.

Governors are supportive of the school and show great pride in it. They contribute purposefully towards setting a strategic direction for the school by working with the local authority to change the leadership arrangements. Through regular visits and learning walks, governors have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and some aspects that are in need of improvement. However, over time, their contribution to self-evaluation activities has been limited. This limits their ability to hold the school to account for pupils' attainment, particularly those who are more able.

The school responds appropriately to some national and local priorities, for example to develop pupils' use of the Welsh language. Teachers have considered the requirements of the new curriculum for Wales and provide increasing opportunities for pupils to influence what they learn. A good example of this is the way in which older pupils in key stage 2 create their own learning pathways. However, the school has not considered the requirements of the Digital Competence Framework in order to address the gaps in its current provision.

Leaders monitor expenditure carefully to ensure that the school has a suitable supply of good resources to support learning effectively in most areas of the curriculum. The school has recorded a significant financial deficit this year and, as a result, leaders have agreed on an appropriate plan to reduce this deficit with the local authority. The school uses the pupil deprivation grant appropriately to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of those who are eligible to receive it.

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 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 the specialist resource base (where appropriate), 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 (where appropriate) and in outdoor areas
- visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning (where appropriate)
- 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:

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