



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

A report on

Ysgol Gynradd Gorslas

**Black Lion Road
Gorslas
Llanelli
Carmarthenshire
SA14 7LA**

Date of inspection: June 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Gynradd Gorslas

Name of provider	Ysgol Gynradd Gorslas
Local authority	Carmarthenshire
Language of the provider	Welsh-medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	155
Pupils of statutory school age	119
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	15
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 21.3%)</i>	14.8%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 22.2%)</i>	33.6%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	31.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	October 2007
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	25/03/2014

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different from those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website:
mylocalschool.gov.wales

- a) The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Ysgol Gynradd Gorslas is a happy and inclusive community that places a high priority on the wellbeing of its pupils. Staff work together effectively to identify the needs of all individuals within the school. As a result, pupils take pride in having robust relationships to discuss any concerns in a safe environment.

Most pupils make appropriate progress from their starting points. On the whole, they make suitable progress in developing their Welsh and English skills. With the support of an adult, they begin to gain the confidence to speak Welsh in formal and informal situations. Pupils contribute well to a variety of groups and committees and enjoy sharing ideas on what they would like to see when developing the school's new site.

A majority of the staff have high expectations of pupils but, overall, this is not consistent across the school. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that is adapted continuously while preparing and planning for the Curriculum for Wales. It ensures suitable opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy and ICT skills in a range of real-life contexts. However, there are not regular enough opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills across the areas of learning. There is a strong working relationship between staff and assistants, and they facilitate learning successfully.

The headteacher and leaders share a clear vision to provide a complete education based on supporting pupils' wellbeing and working together for the future. They concentrate well on ensuring that all staff feel that they are part of the school team. This ensures that everyone, including governors, understand the school's priorities and work together supportively. However, the school's self-evaluation and planning for improvement arrangements are not effective enough to identify its strengths and areas for improvement.

Recommendations

- R1 Refine self-evaluation processes by scrutinising learners' standards and monitor and evaluate teaching and learning more effectively
- R2 Provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills across the areas of learning
- R3 Ensure that all members of staff across the school have high expectations for all pupils

What happens next

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

Main findings

Learning

During their time at the school, most pupils develop knowledge, understanding and skills that are appropriate for their stages and starting points. They recall previous learning, acquire knowledge, deepen their understanding and develop their skills successfully. Many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make strong progress in their learning.

Many pupils develop their oral skills consistently across the school. The youngest pupils develop their listening skills beneficially and respect each other's contributions. They enjoy singing familiar songs and nursery rhymes and expand their vocabulary and language patterns skilfully. As pupils move through the school, many develop their listening skills appropriately and speak confidently about their feelings by using suitable vocabulary. At the top of the school, many older pupils discuss the effect of exercise on the heart and extend their use of the Welsh language appropriately. A majority of pupils make suitable progress in their Welsh and English communication skills, for example by presenting information about themselves. On the whole, with consistent support from adults, they begin to gain the confidence to speak Welsh with increasing accuracy in formal and informal situations.

Most pupils' reading skills develop effectively as they move through the school. Most nursery and reception pupils enjoy listening to stories and re-reading them to their friends and adults. They begin to recognise and name a range of sounds and use this knowledge to begin to read simple words, for example about things that can be seen at the seaside. By Year 2, many pupils read with fluency and a sound understanding of reading techniques. They develop their skills effectively to gather simple information, for example about Gorslas church. As pupils move through the school, they build on this progress and develop a good range of techniques to become fluent readers. By Year 6, many pupils read a range of appropriate texts in both languages and apply their reading skills, including digital texts, effectively to support their learning, for example when learning about the Second World War.

Many pupils' writing skills develop consistently during their time at the school. Most of the youngest pupils make marks to begin to form letters and write simple words. As their skills develop, they spell unfamiliar words with increasing accuracy, for example as they write different verbs when listing instructions to make an egg sandwich. By Year 4, many develop their skills suitable and begin to vary their vocabulary and sentence patterns when writing. They develop relevant knowledge of the correct use of the Welsh language by following a consistent structure in regular activities. They use this knowledge appropriately in a limited range of writing genres, for example by using extensive vocabulary when presenting an argument for and against wearing school uniform. On the whole, many pupils in Years 3 to 6 do not make consistent enough progress in developing their extended writing skills across the areas of learning.

From an early age, most pupils develop their mathematics skills effectively. They recognise numbers up to ten and use this knowledge well to add and subtract different numbers, for example while playing simple games. Year 1 pupils recognise

different shapes well and use their understanding effectively in stimulating activities in the outdoor area. As pupils move through the school, most continue to make strong progress. For example, Year 3 pupils develop their measuring skills by calculating the perimeter and area of regular shapes and apply their skills effectively to real-life contexts. At the top of the school, many pupils use a wide range of methods to calculate mentally and on paper when solving problems. They describe their thinking methods and reasoning well and explain how they have come to conclusions, for example when solving problems about the most effective method of creating windmills as part of their work on renewable energy at Pendine Wind Farm.

Most pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developing soundly. The youngest pupils use programmable toys regularly when solving simple problems as part of their numeracy work. Year 3 pupils use the Hwb program confidently when composing a digital musical score by varying the beat and rhythm creatively when emulating the syllables in the names of farm animals. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 create and use databases and spreadsheets successfully in a stimulating range of learning topics. For example, they develop their skills to select data about airports across the world and filter the results skilfully to choose the ones that are most suitable for different travel purposes.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are happy to attend school and enjoy the company of friends and adults in an inclusive and supportive environment. They feel that they are supported well by staff, know where to turn if they need support and are confident that staff will listen to any concerns and deal with them appropriately. Most pupils are caring and tolerant towards each other and adults in the classroom and around the school.

Many pupils listen carefully to what their peers and teachers say and respond thoughtfully to their ideas. They play together happily, take turns and support each other well while playing games and socialising during break time. The sports ambassadors support pupils to take part in physical activities during break times. They use the Welsh language effectively to motivate their fellow pupils to take part in physical activities and encourage their friends to speak the language with increasing confidence in informal situations. These activities contribute firmly to promoting nearly all pupils' understanding of the importance of staying healthy by keeping fit and the importance of speaking Welsh. Nearly all pupils' understanding of eating and drinking healthily and the effect of exercise on their health is developing effectively. Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online by taking part in regular ICT activities; for example, they know not to share their passwords.

Most of the youngest pupils are able to reflect on their learning. They respond well to oral feedback from adults to improve their work and develop their skills further. A majority of older pupils respond to oral feedback from adults and are willing to improve their work, often by working with a partner. In the best practice, they respond appropriately to teachers' written feedback and are confident about what they need to do to progress their learning.

Many pupils show an interest in lessons and are beginning to make choices about what they learn as part of the termly themes. Most of the youngest pupils develop their skills enthusiastically in stimulating activities in the classroom and the outdoor

areas. They take turns sensibly and work together effectively when completing tasks, for example as they build a dog kennel. As pupils move through the school, many are keen to learn and participate in activities regularly. On the whole, a majority treat their peers and adults with respect and persevere with tasks appropriately. However, a few pupils are unwilling to listen for extended periods and do not persevere with their work without support from an adult. A minority do not always demonstrate pride in their work by presenting it neatly enough.

Many pupils shoulder responsibilities conscientiously, for example by acting as members of the school's councils, which have been re-established recently. They understand that they represent the views of other pupils in the school community and undertake this responsibility conscientiously. For example, members of the eco council conduct a litter survey in the park and write to the local council to ask for more refuse bins. They are keen to keep the environment clear of litter and collect it safely with support from adults. The enthusiastic *Criw Cymraeg* is beginning to promote the use of the Welsh language in formal and informal situations, for example by organising for their peers to sing '*Hei Mr Urdd*' together as part of the organisation's centenary celebrations.

Following the pandemic, inspectors are not reporting on pupil attendance rates during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years. However, the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance is reported on as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

Teachers provide a broad and balanced curriculum. Teachers have sound subject knowledge, on the whole, and plan lessons that engage pupils' interest well. Provision for digital skills is a strength. For example, Year 1 pupils use a data presentation program effectively to show how much plastic was on the beach. However, in a minority of classes, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Although teachers across the school provide valuable opportunities for pupils to work independently on specific tasks, there are not enough opportunities for them to make decisions in relation to their learning. In the oldest pupils' classes, over-use of worksheets prevents pupils from writing freely. As a result, not all pupils achieve to the best of their ability.

Leaders and staff work together appropriately in developing their vision for the Curriculum for Wales. Teachers are beginning to experiment while planning learning activities within the areas of learning and experience. The principles and basic teaching and learning methods are beginning to become embedded and are starting to contribute to developing pupils to become adventurous and creative learners.

A majority of teachers include pupils' ideas when providing activities within prepared themes. The curriculum is enriched effectively through educational visits for pupils to places of interest that stimulate learning. For example, Year 3 pupils went on a trip to a farm to see cows being milked and tasted the milk as part of their theme of 'on the farm'. By doing so, pupils develop their skills beneficially in real-life contexts.

A majority of teachers maintain a good pace to their lessons with a range of stimulating activities. They use various questioning techniques effectively to extend

pupils' understanding, for example extending their mathematics skills by solving problems about the effect of travel on their environment. They set clear learning objectives and use a range of purposeful resources to engage pupils' interest, for example by providing a range of recycling waste to create a ship that floats. In the most effective practice, teachers present stimulating activities enthusiastically and hold pupils' interest effectively. As a result, pupils immerse themselves completely in their learning and make sound progress in their skills.

The school has agreed plans that support pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Teachers have also begun to use a scheme to raise the standard of pupils' oral and written Welsh skills. This is having an appropriate effect on the ability of many pupils to acquire the Welsh language and use it with increasing confidence both inside and outside the classroom. However, teachers do not provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills consistently enough across the areas of learning. As a result, this hinders pupils' ability to write at length for different purposes.

Staff know the pupils very well, which contributes to the school's prominent inclusive ethos. Teachers provide valuable oral feedback to support pupils to know what they need to do to improve their work. In the youngest pupils' classes, staff question pupils skilfully and extend their understanding adeptly in activities in the classroom and the outdoor area. Across the school, teachers' written feedback is inconsistent and they do not always provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to improve their work. On the whole, teachers use progress-tracking arrangements appropriately when planning the next steps in pupils' learning.

The foundation phase staff have a sound knowledge of the principles. They provide a range of interesting learning activities that are presented in a rich learning environment. Teachers present tasks masterfully and there is a good balance between those that are led by an adult and those that nurture pupils' independent learning skills. Highly effective co-operation between teachers and assistants is a strong feature of provision. This, in turn, has a positive effect on pupils' wellbeing and learning. Staff use the school's resources effectively, including the outdoor areas regularly, for example during '*Mentro Mas*' periods. This has a positive effect on most pupils as they develop their skills of co-operating and persevering with practical tasks, for example as pupils plan and make a home for the 'little red hen'.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring and inclusive community that values all learners. There is a strong emphasis on knowing the child as a complete individual, in addition to getting to know their families. This has a strong influence as the school's staff work successfully with its community. All staff contribute purposefully to the school's caring ethos. By using a variety of techniques, pupils are given purposeful opportunities to express their concerns and their willingness to learn during the morning discussions. Staff nurture and develop pupils' moral and spiritual understanding effectively by conducting assemblies and activities in the classroom. Council members organise fun-filled activities to raise money for local and national charities, for example by supporting the food bank and raising money for children in Ukraine.

Arrangements for tracking and monitoring the progress of individual pupils and groups are appropriate. Staff identify pupils' needs at an early stage and provide them with effective support through support programmes. These programmes have a positive effect on pupils' wellbeing and their literacy and numeracy skills. This is valued by pupils as they gain the confidence to participate fully in learning activities.

The ALN co-ordinator holds purposeful meetings with teachers, assistants, pupils and parents to plan and evaluate provision. Together, they monitor pupils' progress and set purposeful targets for improvement that enable pupils to make sound progress in their learning. The school works effectively with specialist agencies, for example when providing emotional support for pupils and their families. Provision promotes and supports pupils' behaviour appropriately. However, in a minority of classes, staff's expectations are not consistent enough to ensure that pupils persevere with their work and concentrate for extended periods.

Staff provide many opportunities for pupils to be active during the school day, for example as the bronze ambassadors promote playground games during break time. They promote pupils' sound understanding of the importance of staying healthy and the effect of exercise on their health. Staff also encourage pupils to make healthy choices when eating; for example, Year 3 pupils learn about healthy foods by rewording a popular Welsh song to include the names of fruit and vegetables.

The school provides purposeful opportunities for pupils to play key roles in making decisions about the school's developments. Pupils elect council members and, in turn, the work of these committees has a positive effect on the school's life and work. For example, members have gathered ideas to develop the learning environment in the new building and have promoted re-using wood to make flower troughs.

The school creates strong links with the community, which enriches pupils' learning experiences robustly. For example, staff organise activities between pupils and members of the community successfully as part of the '*clwb pontio'r pentref*' arrangement. Pupils support the digital skills of members of the community skilfully and they, in turn, nurture pupils' problem-solving and co-operation skills by playing board games. This supports pupils to communicate with increasing confidence and deepens their understanding of their identity and local heritage.

The headteacher monitors pupils' attendance and punctuality in a robust arrangement and works closely with parents and external agencies, where necessary. The school has an appropriate culture and attitude towards pupils' safety and wellbeing and the school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has worked with a range of partners to create a purposeful vision that reflects the school's principles and journey into the future. Although preparations for the Curriculum for Wales are in their early stages, leaders and staff are succeeding in realising a key element of the vision, namely ensuring that everyone 'works together, learns together and grows together'. The headteacher has established a supportive culture that encourages staff to take part in beneficial opportunities to develop their understanding and skills. Her leadership makes a

valuable contribution to establishing a strong team ethos and a sense of belonging among the staff. This ensures that nearly all staff are passionate about the school and its community. Staff's roles and responsibilities are clear and they have a sound awareness of their contributions to ensuring the wellbeing and safety of pupils. The awareness of leaders and staff of all pupils' needs is a notable element of the school.

The school has effective processes to manage the performance of teachers and assistants, which are based on their individual professional needs, the school's priorities and national priorities. Leaders have created a positive culture to provide regular professional learning opportunities for all staff. They are encouraged to develop professionally continuously by shouldering additional responsibilities. For example, one teacher is working purposefully with the local authority to share effective teaching and learning practices. Another example of the effective development of the school workforce is the role of assistants in supporting pupils' emotional wellbeing needs. They share information about support programmes with the school's staff and in local schools to demonstrate effective practices. In addition to training and professional learning opportunities, leaders work effectively with the Cwm Gwendraeth cluster of schools. They work together to present and ensure consistency in teaching and learning methods to support pupils to practise and raise standards of Welsh following the pandemic. These beneficial opportunities are beginning to have a positive effect on the school's provision to support pupils to make progress in their learning in a supportive learning environment.

On the whole, the school's self-evaluation and planning for improvement arrangements are not effective enough to address the areas that are in need of development. Although leaders have identified and improved aspects of provision, such as pupils' oral Welsh skills, they do not always evaluate the quality of provision and standards in enough detail. The recent school improvement plan includes a suitable range of priorities, although the actions are not always incisive enough and do not focus adequately on improving pupils' skills. Progress monitoring reports against the priorities are also not evaluative enough and do not highlight the next steps clearly enough. As a result, leaders do not have a sound enough understanding of the school's current situation in terms of what is good and what needs to be improved.

Members of the governing body fulfil their duties appropriately and have a consistent understanding of the school's day-to-day arrangements. For example, they looked at the staffing situation during the move to the new school and ensured opportunities to reduce the administrative burden on the headteacher. The governing body also ensures that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily. They receive termly reports from the headteacher that highlight the school's life and work. However, they do not challenge leaders adequately to gain information about strengths and areas for improvement in relation to teaching and learning. They do not have a sound enough understanding of pupils' progress and standards.

Leaders make sensible use of funding, including the pupil development grant, which has a positive effect on improving pupils' skills. For example, they have allocated funding to increase the assistants' hours to conduct support programmes and help pupils in the classrooms.

The school has a positive relationship with parents and the wider community. Parents feel that they are able to talk to any member of staff to discuss their children's wellbeing and education. Relevant information about the school's activities is shared effectively with parents through a variety of communication methods.

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/members of the management committee 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, middle leaders, and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work 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 lessons, 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
- 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' well-being, 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 (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>)

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

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website:

<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>

This document has been translated by Trosol (Welsh to English).