



Report summary for parents and carers on Ysgol Maes y Gwendraeth

Date of inspection: November 2023

by Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

Overview

The respect between pupils and staff at Ysgol Maes y Gwendraeth and the strong pastoral ethos are notable elements at the school. Staff's care for pupils is clear and they have a good knowledge of them. Pupils express their pride in being members of the school community and most feel that they have someone to turn to if necessary. There is a friendly and welcoming atmosphere at the school and pupils communicate eloquently with visitors. Most pupils show positive attitudes towards their learning and behave very well in lessons. However, pupils' attendance, particularly those who are eligible for free school meals, is not high enough.

In many lessons, good quality teaching means that pupils make sound progress overall. In a few particularly effective lessons where planning is very skilful, pupils make strong and swift progress. In a minority of lessons, pupils do not achieve to the best of their ability because teachers have not planned the lessons carefully enough to provide a suitable level of challenge. In a few lessons, teachers' expectations are too low. Recently, the school has been experimenting with different methods of assessing pupils' work. In some cases, this has led to beneficial feedback for pupils, but in other cases assessment practices is more varied.

The curriculum provides a range of valuable opportunities for pupils both within lessons and outside the classroom. The effect of provision to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills can be seen in the positive development that many pupils make in many aspects of their skills. The comprehensive provision for developing pupils as responsible and knowledgeable citizens is notable. A myriad of interesting and relevant experiences is provided for pupils through the personal and social education (PSE) and well-being programme, through opportunities for pupils to express their opinions and lead, and through the advice and guidance given to them about the next steps in their lives, particularly the world of work.

Canolfan yr Eithin is the local authority's specialist centre for pupils with autism. The centre is situated in the heart of the school and its pupils are given every opportunity to engage in school life. The centre's staff provide stimulating areas and opportunities that respond well to pupils' needs and enable them to make good progress. The supportive relationship with the parents of these pupils is an excellent feature.

Although the new headteacher has been in post for less than a year, he is well respected by staff and pupils and has a clear vision. He has introduced important changes to operate more strategically and support staff well-being. Staff benefit from the strong culture of professional development at the school and the valuable opportunities for them to develop their practice and broaden their experiences.

Leaders at all levels take part in beneficial self-evaluation activities and have a good understanding of the school's main strengths and areas for improvement. Although they use a suitable range of evidence, their use and analysis of this information, particularly data, is not always thorough or incisive enough. As a result, they do not support the self-evaluation and planning for improvement process consistently in full. Governors are keen to provide Welsh-medium education in the area, but their role as critical friends has not been developed sufficiently.

Main evaluation of the sixth form

Sixth-form pupils are mature and proud pupils. They are enthusiastic ambassadors for the school who take pride in their roles of leading and mentoring younger pupils. In their lessons, they engage fully with their learning and show an interest in their studies. Their oral skills are particularly strong and they can speak fluently and confidently. On the whole, they make sound progress.

Recommendations

We have made 3 recommendations to help the school to continue to improve:

- R1 Improve pupils' attendance and the effect of procedures to do so**
- R2 Strengthen the use of data to support the self-evaluation and planning for improvement process and ensure that areas for improvement are incisive enough**
- R3 Develop the role of the governing body in full**

What happens next

The school will draw up 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 provision to develop pupils as responsible and knowledgeable citizens, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Statutory compliance

Safeguarding arrangements

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

Healthy eating and drinking

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

School funding

Leaders and governors manage the school's funding appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

Health and safety issues (site safety)

A health and safety letter has been issued to the LA in relation to concerns.

School context

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| Name of provider | Ysgol Maes y Gwendraeth |
| Local authority | Carmarthenshire County Council |
| Language of the provider | Welsh |
| Number of pupils on roll | 1108 |
| Pupils of statutory school age | 927 |
| Number in sixth form | 181 |
| Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the secondary sector is 20.2%) | 12.3% |
| Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the secondary sector is 17.8%) | 17.5% |
| Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home | 56.4% |
| Date of headteacher appointment | 01/09/2023 |
| Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable) | 03/10/2016 |
| Start date of inspection | 20/11/2023 |

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