



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

A report on

Ysgol Gymunedol Peniel

**Peniel
Carmarthen
SA32 7AB**

Date of inspection: February 2024

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Gymunedol Peniel

Name of provider	Ysgol Gymunedol Peniel
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	124
Pupils of statutory school age	110
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	0
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 23.7%)</i>	2.5%
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 13.2%)</i>	5.6%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	62%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	1
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/06/2015
Start date of inspection	05/02/2024

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

Ensuring the well-being, care and happiness of all pupils is an integral part of the school's ethos. The school places a firm emphasis on maintaining a familial, caring, stimulating and community learning environment where pupils can develop to the best of their ability in all aspects of their work. As a result, nearly all pupils are happy at school and take pride in being part of its community. They behave excellently and treat others with a high level of respect. Most develop as confident learners and aim to achieve high standards, showing enjoyment and pride in their learning. Nearly all make sound progress from their starting points.

The headteacher is an energetic leader who has a clear vision for the school and who drives improvement continuously. All staff work together excellently as a team and implement the principles of the school's motto, namely '*Un tîm, un teulu – llwyddo gyda'n gilydd*' ('One team, one family – succeeding together'), successfully. They provide a broad, balanced and rich curriculum for pupils, which is based on thematic work and challenges them to make the best possible progress at all times. Governors, parents and members of the local community support the school's work effectively.

All staff have high expectations of themselves and pupils and develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills successfully. Their methods to develop pupils' extended spoken language are highly effective and promote their understanding and use of mutations and verbs successfully. Similarly, their methods for promoting pupils' reading skills are also highly effective and contribute positively to their motivation, progress and enjoyment of reading. This leads to high standards of oracy and reading which soon improve the quality of pupils' writing.

Recommendations

- R1 The school should continue on its improvement journey. There are no specific recommendations arising from this inspection

What happens next

Estyn will invite the school to prepare case studies on its work in relation to:

- Planning for improvement to ensure the best experiences for its pupils
- Provision to improve its pupils' spoken Welsh skills

to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Learning

On entry to the school, most pupils' Welsh communication skills and social skills are equivalent to, or above, what is expected for their age. While at the school, nearly all make sound progress from their starting points in all aspects of their work.

The listening skills of nearly all pupils across the school develop very well. They listen attentively to presentations and stories and follow instructions correctly and knowledgeably. Nearly all develop their oral skills confidently in Welsh and English. They talk about their tasks and learning experiences in mature and extensive language, demonstrating a sound awareness of purpose and audience. Many respond very successfully to teachers' purposeful and masterful language modelling and communicate confidently by using rich vocabulary. Nearly all pupils develop sound reading skills. They read various texts for different purposes with good expression and understanding. From the earliest age to the top of the school, most pupils make very good progress in their writing skills. Many develop a sound understanding of the features of a wide range of genres and show a good awareness of purpose and audience. They apply their knowledge of grammatical elements and vocabulary very well to their writing tasks.

Nearly all pupils use their understanding of different mathematical concepts confidently and apply this intelligently in a variety of contexts. Those in the youngest pupils' classes come to count confidently and demonstrate a sound understanding of one-to-one matching. At the top of the school, nearly all pupils use their understanding of the four rules of number and their knowledge of place value effectively, for example to solve problems based on the cost of renovating a house.

Nearly all pupils make sound progress in developing their digital skills in a variety of contexts across the curriculum. They work together successfully to create digital presentations and posters, graphs, and charts to convey information based on their theme work. By the time they reach the top of the school, many use spreadsheets effectively to handle data and find relevant information based on this data.

Nearly all pupils apply their literacy, numeracy, and digital skills confidently, successfully and to a high standard in their thematic work. For example, when studying the theme 'A Child's War', pupils at the top of the school wrote the diary of a soldier, a dialogue between soldiers, and poems about refugees highly effectively. They collected and used data about food rationing and used their understanding of fractions confidently to solve problems relating to feeding a family during the war. Most pupils used their online research skills and understanding of databases sensibly to record the names, addresses and ages of people from the area who lost their lives during the First World War. Most used their creative skills highly effectively to create pictures of the red sky during the Blitz.

As part of their theme 'Lawr y Lôn Goch', most Year 3 and 4 pupils held a sensible discussion about whether they preferred pasta or pizza in an Italian restaurant. Many wrote an interesting description of the process of making butter and recorded an experiment on how much water is contained in different foods. Most created poetry of

a high standard entitled '*Pam*' ('Why'), emulating the style of different poets successfully. Most used their mathematical skills successfully to compare prices of goods in different shops and their digital skills to research from which countries different unusual foods come, such as haggis or escargot.

Year 1 and 2 pupils wrote a purposeful formal letter to thank staff at a local museum following their visit there to learn about life at the school in the past on the theme '*Peniel a Fi*' ('Peniel and Me'). Others designed an invitation to a baptism at the local chapel. Most used extremely refined vocabulary and varied their sentences skilfully. Many solved a problem relating to odd and even numbers in a context based on houses in the village and placed pictures of the school, both past and present, on a timeline correctly. Many created a chart to convey information about the teachers, such as the number of years they have worked at the school.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are happy at the school and are proud to be part of its caring and inclusive community. Pupils' high attendance rates reflect this. This rate is higher than the average attendance rates of primary schools in Wales and the local authority and is improving annually. Pupils feel safe at school and are completely confident that staff listen and respond promptly to any concerns they may have.

Nearly all pupils have an increasing and effective understanding of robust values that develop them as ethical, informed and principled citizens. They behave excellently and demonstrate a high level of courtesy towards their peers and members of staff. The maturity they show when welcoming visitors to the school is impressive. As a result, strong relationships are a clear strength across the school. This is highlighted effectively in the way in which older pupils take care of the youngest pupils during break times.

Nearly all pupils appreciate that staff consider their views in decisions that affect them. They undertake their leadership roles responsibly and intelligently. Most are confident and willing to suggest their own ideas about what they would like to learn within the themes and welcome opportunities to choose their tasks, in addition to how they would like to present them. They are also willing to contribute to the content of their one-page profiles and identify what is important to them as individuals.

Most pupils develop a very good awareness of the importance of taking care of their mental and emotional well-being. They develop their understanding of their rights effectively and discuss their feelings openly. Most respond very well, for example to the 'Feelings Wall' in each class. They understand that opportunities like this promote their well-being and resilience effectively.

Most pupils understand the importance of making choices that affect their physical health, including eating and drinking healthily and the need to keep fit. Pupils at the top of the school undertake their responsibility of running a successful fruit shop during break time conscientiously, which is proving popular among their peers. Nearly all pupils apply themselves enthusiastically to their physical education lessons and to the wide range of activities, such as the school's sports clubs and competitions such as rugby, football, cricket, netball and swimming.

Nearly all pupils concentrate well for extended periods and make the most of their time in lessons. They persevere and show resilience, for example when facing challenging situations or information that is new to them. They respond very positively to the *'Dysgwyr Disglair'* strategy, which recognises and rewards important elements such as effort, perseverance, and resilience on a weekly basis.

Nearly all pupils work diligently individually, in pairs, in groups or as a whole class. They show respect and support for each other's contributions and achievements. They take increasing responsibility for their learning, respond to advice on how to improve and show flexibility and maturity in the way in which they move smoothly from one activity to the next, without making a fuss. As a result, most pupils develop well as confident learners and aim to achieve high standards, showing enjoyment and pride in their learning. They maintain excellent motivation and show curiosity towards their tasks. Most pupils have a sound awareness of procedures for staying safe online and apply this effectively to their learning tasks.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school's curriculum is broad, balanced, and rich, and challenges pupils successfully to make the best possible progress. The teaching team, namely the teachers and teaching assistants, work together closely and productively to plan exciting and interesting experiences for pupils, which support the principles of Curriculum for Wales successfully. They encourage pupils to express an opinion about what they would like to learn and to offer their own ideas when planning new themes, and then use their suggestions when preparing learning activities.

The teaching team plans purposefully to develop a wide range of the pupils' skills, including their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. They have good subject knowledge and high expectations to challenge pupils to produce high quality work. They support pupils to apply their skills across the curriculum effectively. A variety of rich opportunities are provided for pupils in the foundation learning department to develop their creative skills, such as art, music and drama in the creating and performance areas. Lively activities are also provided that engage pupils' interest and knowledge of the local area and beyond, such as the Year 3 and 4 work on the Celts and the Year 5 and 6 work on the Second World War.

The school meets the learning and well-being needs of nearly all pupils well when planning the curriculum. The teaching team work together highly successfully to support pupils' learning purposefully, ensuring that they provide them with valuable support. Tasks build coherently on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills to ensure progression as they move through the school. They know when to intervene and when to encourage them to persevere independently.

Teachers place a clear focus on teaching specific literacy and numeracy skills in formal lessons and then provide opportunities for pupils to apply them in different contexts in their theme work. For example, in Years 3 and 4, pupils learn about scale before applying their measuring skills to find the distance between different locations linked to famous legends, such as the Twrch Trwyth and Gelert, on a map of Wales.

Provision to develop pupils' oral, reading and writing skills are strong features throughout the school. For example, in the foundation learning classes, a range of

strategies, such as drilling, singing and role-playing, are used very effectively to promote pupils' oracy. In the other pupils' classes, they are encouraged to discuss their ideas about issues such as holidays to space orally before recording them by writing in different genres. The school has very effective strategies to develop pupils' extended spoken language and promote their understanding and use of linguistic elements, such as mutations and verbs effectively. The teaching team are strong and effective linguistic models and all focus on developing pupils' oracy for a specific period each day. The teaching team also develop a specific strategy to promote pupils' skills and enjoyment in reading. This has a positive effect on pupils' motivation, progress and enjoyment in reading. This leads to high standards of oracy and reading, which soon improves the quality of pupils' writing.

Across the school, the teaching team encourage pupils to be independent learners. For example, in the foundation learning classes, they provide opportunities for pupils to choose suitable equipment and resources to make a crown. At the top of the school, they encourage pupils to compose a piece of spooky digital music to accompany their theme work on '*Syllu ar y Sêr*' ('Stargazing').

Members of the teaching team use the indoor and outdoor learning areas effectively to provide a variety of experiences for pupils. For example, they provide engaging opportunities for pupils in the foundation learning classes to use the outdoor area to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in the mud kitchen. They experiment with different utensils to make a cake for Supertaten and count and discuss what they are doing amongst themselves.

The school takes advantage of the contribution of visitors and visits to places of interest to expand and enrich the learning experiences for pupils. For example, pupils in the reception class visit the library as part of their theme '*Un tro*' ('Once upon a time') to promote their interest in the world of books.

The teaching team identify the educational needs of nearly all pupils very well and provide them with constructive and purposeful oral and written feedback to support their learning successfully. They question pupils skilfully to verify their understanding and to extend their efforts. They also ensure that there are beneficial and regular opportunities for pupils to respond to their comments, where appropriate. This helps pupils to understand exactly what they need to do to succeed and make sound progress in their learning.

Care, support and guidance

Ensuring the care, inclusion and happiness of all pupils and members of staff is an integral part of the school's ethos. A continuous emphasis is placed on maintaining a familial community which is based on firm values and where each individual can thrive and develop in an inclusive, stimulating and welcoming environment. The school has a robust culture of safeguarding and very effective procedures to promote pupils' attendance and punctuality. As a result, the school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

The headteacher and teaching team are passionate about protecting the well-being of all pupils and ensure that they are in a positive place to learn. They have a thorough knowledge of the well-being and learning needs of nearly all pupils and

personalise provision to address them. For example, they hold regular meetings to discuss each pupil's progress and create a one-page profile for each individual, each class and one for the whole school. This aspect highlights good practice and is a strength within the school.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is highly organised, comprehensive and effective. The headteacher, who is responsible for co-ordinating this aspect, works closely with the teaching team to identify pupils who need additional support. Learning support staff provide a range of intervention strategies and programmes to support the well-being and basic skills of pupils on the ALN register, along with those who are a cause for concern. As a result, nearly all of these pupils make at least good progress. The school also has close links with the parents of pupils with ALN and a productive relationship with a diverse range of external agencies to support this cohort of pupils.

Staff place a strong and continuous emphasis on developing the learner's voice in an inclusive and equal manner. Staff provide pupils with various opportunities to be valuable members of the school's councils. They provide opportunities for them to lead a host of rich activities, such as organising a Christmas wrapping paper recycling project, which also promotes their commitment to sustainability issues very successfully.

Promoting pupils' pride in the Welsh language and their Welsh identity is an integral part of the school's life and work. For example, the teaching team provides pupils with rich opportunities to learn about legends and characters such as St. Dwynwen and Cantre'r Gwaelod. The '*Cymro neu Gymraes yr Wythnos*' ('Welshman or Welshwoman of the Week') strategy is an effective means of motivating pupils to speak Welsh in all situations. The '*Criw Cymraeg*' undertake their role seriously in promoting Welshness and encouraging their peers to speak Welsh. They show obvious pride in their achievements, which include organising the school eisteddfod each year and leading the celebration of 'Welsh Language Music Day'.

The school places a very clear emphasis on providing opportunities for all pupils to learn about global issues. This is a means of expanding their horizons further. For example, pupils in the foundation learning classes learn about life in Lesotho and pupils at the top of the school have French lessons.

The teaching team develop pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, cultural and social issues well. Pupils are given an opportunity to reflect on values such as friendship, tolerance and respect for diversity. Religion and ethics lessons spark the interest and curiosity of nearly all pupils well. Conducting activities such as a 'mock' baptism in the local chapel, along with learning about and comparing the customs of Advent, Diwali and Hannukah develops their understanding of a range of religions very effectively.

Promoting pupils' creativity is a prominent feature of the school's provision. For example, it provides opportunities for pupils to have musical instrumental lessons and to perform in front of an audience, such as at the end of whole-school morning assemblies. The inclusive approach of the headteacher and staff is reflected in the way in which every effort is made to ensure that all pupils are given an opportunity to take part in shows, concerts, eisteddfodau and services.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is a firm and energetic leader. She has a clear vision for the school. This is based on providing specific opportunities for pupils to develop the skills and knowledge they need to be healthy, capable, creative, moral and useful members of a rapidly changing society. She does this in an inclusive, happy and stable learning environment which aims to ensure that everyone develops into ambitious lifelong learners. She conveys this vision clearly to pupils, staff, parents, governors and members of the local community.

The school maintains a culture of continuous improvement effectively. The headteacher, assistant headteacher and the teaching team work together highly effectively as a team to lead teaching and implement the principles of the school's motto, which is: 'One team, one family – succeeding together'. Together, they ensure that the learning experiences they provide for all pupils are appropriate, of a high standard, exciting, interesting and rich.

In a school of this size, nearly all members of the teaching team have leadership roles in various areas and all have a sound understanding of their duties. Leaders have high expectations of themselves, of the teaching team and of pupils. They demonstrate good values and a high level of professional conduct which contribute extremely positively to ensuring that the school is a safe and homely haven for pupils and staff. They foster a strong culture of safeguarding and monitor the progress and well-being of all pupils highly effectively. Leaders manage the performance of the teaching team continuously to praise them for their professional successes and to encourage them to improve any specific agreed areas for improvement for the benefit of pupils.

The school has very detailed and successful self-evaluation procedures. All members of the leadership team contribute directly to the process, including those who have leadership responsibilities in various areas. Governors, pupils and parents also contribute to them regularly. These procedures are based on a range of sources of first-hand evidence and provide an extremely detailed and accurate picture of the current situation. The information that derives from them has a direct influence of the improvement priorities and focuses specifically on pupils' progress. The school's improvement procedures are comprehensive and have a positive effect on improving pupils' achievement, attainment and progress.

The school bases staff's professional learning activities on national priorities, the priorities in the improvement plan and on their individual professional needs. Leaders monitor the effect of these activities on provision and teaching methods. They arrange for the teaching team to have occasional opportunities to observe good practice in other schools, such as different methods of teaching reading, for example. They also provide them with valuable opportunities to observe each other's successful teaching practices. For example, teachers have observed each other recently to develop their methods of modelling language and to improve the energy of their presentations.

Governors provide leaders with a sensible and beneficial balance of support and challenge. They visit the school regularly to evaluate specific aspects of provision and to hold discussions with the co-ordinators. As a result, they have a sound

understanding of the school's strengths and the few areas for improvement. This enables them to contribute to setting the strategic priorities in an extremely informed manner and to fulfil their responsibilities as critical friends very effectively. Together with the administrative officer, they manage the school's funding purposefully and prudently. This includes the pupil development grant, which is used appropriately to reduce the impact of poverty on pupils' educational attainment. They also ensure that the school has purposeful arrangements to promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders have a highly productive relationship with parents and ensure that they have effective communication process to enable them to raise any issues that may affect their children's learning and well-being. They use the school website, an appropriate app, social media and e-mail to do this. Leaders provide parents with regular opportunities to express an opinion about provision and respond to their comments in a timely manner. For example, following a request from parents, they have adapted the homework arrangements. The parents' and friends' association is extremely active in raising money to support the school, ensuring that no pupils is at an economic disadvantage. For example, it makes a generous contribution to the cost of educational visits. Parents value this greatly.

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:

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