



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

A report on

**Ysgol Y Gogarth
Nant y Gamar Road
Craig Y Don
Llandudno
LL30 1YE**

Date of inspection: October 2017

by

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

About Ysgol Y Gogarth

Ysgol y Gogarth is a day and residential special school situated in the coastal town of Llandudno. It is the only special school maintained by Conwy local authority. Currently there are 223 pupils on roll aged from 3 to 19. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs for moderate and severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties or autistic spectrum disorders (ASD).

Most pupils come from the Conwy local authority area and a very few come from neighbouring local authorities. Nearly all of the pupils are from English-speaking backgrounds. Around 38% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. A few pupils are looked after by the local authority.

The school manages a residential facility that offers short-term placements for pupils who attend the school. The school also provides a base for a number of other key services, including the children with disabilities social work team, the ASD outreach team, the sensory support service and child development centre for Conwy. Since the last inspection, the school's site and buildings have been significantly redeveloped as part of the Welsh Government's 21st century schools programme.

Ysgol y Gogarth is currently a pioneer school and is working with the Welsh Government and other schools to take forward developments relating to the curriculum.

The headteacher has been in post since September 2009. The school was last inspected in June 2011.

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

Pupils at Ysgol y Gogarth respond very positively to the school's highly effective strategies to support the development of their communication and independence skills. As a result, nearly all pupils make very strong progress over time in relation to their individual needs and abilities. Nearly all pupils are polite, courteous and respectful to each other, to staff and to visitors. The school's curriculum meets the needs of pupils particularly well. The extensive range of learning experiences promotes very effectively the development of pupils' ability and maturity as they progress through the school. Teachers, teaching assistants and specialist staff work together outstandingly well to identify pupils' individual needs and ensure that lessons build systematically on their abilities and interests. The school works very successfully with parents and partners to ensure it provides stimulating opportunities for pupils to develop skills that prepare them very effectively for future life. The headteacher and senior leadership team demonstrate outstanding leadership. They have developed a coherent strategic vision for the school that places the most important needs of pupils at the heart of all aspects of the school's work.

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

Recommendations

R1 Improve the quality of teaching so that all lessons match the best practice in the school

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 two case studies for dissemination on Estyn's website on the school's work in relation to how its positive behaviour strategies enable pupils to access the curriculum successfully, and how the school's successful collaboration with the local further education college ensures consistent challenge and progression for pupils leaving the school.

Main findings

Standards: Excellent

Over time, nearly all pupils make very strong progress in relation to their individual needs and abilities. Nearly all pupils respond well to the school's highly effective communication and behaviour support strategies, which enable them to access learning and to develop the independent, social and life skills they will need in future life.

It is not appropriate to compare the standards that pupils achieve at the school with national averages or to analyse trends in overall performance over time because of the wide range of pupils' special educational needs. There is no significant difference between the performance of all pupils and that of boys and girls, those pupils eligible for free school meals or those who are looked after by the local authority.

Nearly all pupils develop their communication skills exceptionally well in relation to their needs and abilities. They use a wide range of communication systems to communicate their needs effectively, including picture exchange vocabulary, signing and objects of reference. Pupils with more complex needs use switches and voice output communication aids to make choices and express their wishes. Pupils who are more able respond confidently to questions and ask suitable questions of others to extend their understanding.

Nearly all pupils across the school develop their social skills very well. They engage politely and confidently with visitors to the school. In lessons, most pupils listen carefully and respond positively to guidance and instructions. They work together well, and support and encourage each other effectively

Most pupils make strong progress in developing their independence skills during their time at the school. For example, pupils learn important personal care skills, which contribute significantly to their ability to access the community. Older pupils volunteer to restore the gardens of a local community centre and participate in enterprise projects, such as the school's firewood-selling business, Gog's Logs. Pupils in the school's café learn valuable customer service and food preparation skills.

A few pupils benefit from planned opportunities to learn independent living skills in the context of the school's residential facility, Llys Gogarth. These include important home-making skills, such as learning how to make a bed and use a washing machine. These opportunities prepare pupils exceptionally well for a more independent life after they leave school.

Most pupils develop their creativity and physical skills very well. Pupils in the foundation phase create sensory collages to explore textures and strengthen their fine motor skills. In physical education lessons, older pupils develop their risk-taking and co-ordination skills successfully using the climbing wall.

Most pupils make strong progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills and apply these skills effectively across the curriculum. In key stage 2, more able pupils read accurately and confidently. They use appropriate strategies to break down unfamiliar words successfully. Pupils in the foundation phase respond suitably through vocalisation and gesture to demonstrate their understanding of numbers and demonstrate good matching and sorting skills. Older pupils use mathematical vocabulary relating to shape accurately, for example when describing prisms and pyramids.

Most pupils improve their understanding of the Welsh language well in relation to their needs and linguistic background. Many engage enthusiastically in learning new words and phrases in Welsh and respond positively to the use of the Welsh language in lessons. A very few pupils who learn through the medium of Welsh make good progress in their acquisition and use of the language.

Many pupils make effective progress in developing their information and communication and technology (ICT) skills during their time at the school. Pupils with complex needs respond well to the use of software programs to strengthen their understanding of cause and effect. Pupils in key stage 4 and key stage 5 use social media effectively to share their learning and show a sound understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

By the time they leave the school, nearly all pupils gain a suitable range of qualifications or units of credit in courses that are well-matched to their needs and abilities. These qualifications include units at entry level 1 to entry level 3, GCSE qualifications in fine art and science, and the Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Certificate. Pupils accessing the school's vocational centre achieve accredited units in an extensive range of useful work-related courses, including car-valeting, painting and decorating and the use of power tools. Over the last three years, nearly all pupils have moved on to further education and specialist college provision.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Pupils at Ysgol y Gogarth demonstrate exceptionally high levels of wellbeing. Over time, nearly all pupils make outstanding progress in developing the skills and strategies they need to understand their feelings and manage their behaviour successfully. Pupils respond very well to the school's distinctive approach to positive behaviour support and the interventions of highly skilled staff. As a result, there have been no exclusions at the school for the past three years.

Working relationships between staff and pupils are outstanding. Nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in school and know that staff will support them well when they feel worried or upset. Pupils enjoy coming to school and show highly positive attitudes to learning. They are punctual to lessons and settle promptly to activities. Most pupils know their routines and the structure of the school day well and they move around the school with confidence and a sense of purpose.

Nearly all pupils are polite, courteous and respectful to each other, to staff and to visitors. They engage well in their learning and take pride in their work. They are eager to share their achievements with others and use their success to support others. Where tasks are more challenging, pupils persevere and demonstrate resilience to achieve the desired outcome.

Most pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and drinking and taking regular exercise. They make beneficial food and drink choices at lunchtimes and throughout the school day.

A very high proportion of pupils engage well in a wide range of inclusive lunchtime and after school clubs, including dodgeball, football, boccia and karate. They take part in these physical activities with enjoyment and enthusiasm. Many pupils use the outdoor play equipment at lunch and break times purposefully and support each other to participate as fully as they can. Around half of pupils represent the school in regional and national sports events and competitions.

Pupils respond very well to the emphasis the school places on the teaching of online safety and cyber bullying and demonstrate suitable awareness of the potential dangers of the internet and social media.

Pupils have worthwhile opportunities to take on relevant roles and responsibilities in the school, such as representing the school on the school council. A few pupils act as school ambassadors on a regional and national level.

Teaching and learning experiences: Excellent

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets pupils' needs exceptionally well. Well-planned schemes of work and a wide range of high quality learning experiences ensure that there is strong continuity and progression in pupils' learning throughout their time at the school.

Teachers plan collaboratively across the school using themes such as feelings and water to engage pupils' interest and learning very successfully. The school makes highly effective use of its status as a pioneer and lead creative school to develop imaginative projects in areas such as science and technology and digital competence.

The school broadens its curriculum provision very well to ensure that learning experiences reflect pupils' readiness to engage with a wider range of activities as they progress through the school. For example, it provides an extensive range of relevant work-related opportunities for pupils at key stage 4 and key stage 5 in the school's vocational centre and café, and through a range of enterprise projects. These experiences are highly effective in supporting pupils to develop and apply new skills in the world of work and in the wider community.

The school has valuable links with the local college. For example, it works closely with the college to ensure that pupils access relevant courses at an appropriate level. Many older pupils attend link courses provided by the college. These experiences develop their self-esteem, social skills and independence particularly well. The extensive collaboration between the school and the college has supported pupils to gain a good range of valuable qualifications and to progress to worthwhile further education and training when they leave the school.

The school's provision to develop pupils' skills is highly effective. It has implemented valuable and innovative approaches to support and develop pupils' communication skills as they move through the school. These approaches have an outstanding impact on pupils' ability to access learning and contribute to pupils' social development exceptionally well.

Pupils receive regular opportunities to learn and apply literacy and numeracy skills in worthwhile contexts in lessons. For example, they work out how much change they should receive when shopping. Provision for pupils to use ICT to support their learning and communication skills is effective.

The school plans well to develop pupils' Welsh language skills and knowledge of Welsh culture. In particular, the school has established an innovative arrangement for bilingual provision to support the Welsh language requirements of pupils who prefer to learn through the medium of Welsh.

Overall, the quality of teaching in the school is good. Staff know their pupils very well and have a thorough understanding of their needs and abilities. Teachers, teaching assistants and specialists from the school's multi-disciplinary team work together very effectively to create a positive and supportive learning environment that ensures that pupils feel safe and are ready to learn. This multi-disciplinary approach to meeting pupils' needs to support their learning is an outstanding feature of the school's work.

Many teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and engagement in their learning. They ensure that learning objectives build well on pupils' previous learning and plan challenging activities that stimulate and engage pupils in their learning. In these lessons, teachers plan carefully to enable pupils to develop and apply their skills successfully across a range of contexts.

Many teachers use a range of suitable questioning techniques to encourage pupils to reflect carefully on their learning. They provide encouraging verbal and written feedback that helps pupils to maintain their focus and builds their confidence. They ensure that pupils have purposeful opportunities to assess their own and others' work so that they know how well they are doing and how they might improve their work. In a few lessons, however, teachers' planning is not sufficiently challenging. In these lessons, teachers do not ensure that activities are engaging enough or matched well enough to pupils' needs.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school's rigorous assessment, monitoring and tracking processes are extremely effective. As a result, staff have high levels of detail on all aspects of pupils' progress and understand their needs very well. The school uses data very well to evaluate pupils' progress, plan their next steps in learning and intervene with appropriate strategies and additional support where necessary. The effective analysis of whole school data has led to many examples of improved practice, such as the introduction of structured play at lunch times. This has had a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and resulted in a reduction in the number of incidents at lunch times.

The school works highly effectively with partners to develop and supplement its provision, especially when pupils do not meet the targets set for them and assessment identifies they need additional support. For example, on-site respite care provision supports pupils to develop important personal and social skills. Specialist therapeutic support has an exceptionally positive impact on pupils' skills development and behaviour.

The school provides an extensive range of highly effective programmes for developing pupils' communication and behaviour. The school's work in this area is outstanding and enables pupils over time to improve their behaviour, engage well with learning and make very good progress during their time at the school.

The school's work with parents is a strength. It provides a range of motivating activities and events to engage parents and family members in pupils' learning. These activities include a fitness boot-camp, karate sessions and cookery classes. These activities are highly valued by families. Reports to parents identify clearly pupils' progress and next steps in learning. Parents are suitably involved in reviewing progress and agreeing next steps.

The comprehensive provision for pupils to keep fit through taking part in sports and exercise is a well-embedded feature of the school's work. The school offers exciting outdoor activities such as orienteering and cycling in collaboration with partners. Daily extra-curricular activities are popular and include a communication club, as well as a climbing and a skiing club. Through careful risk management and adaptive equipment where necessary, these activities are open to all pupils. There are appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Personal and social education is a strong feature of the school's work. The well-planned provision and caring, nurturing environment encourages pupils to take responsibility for their actions and show consideration for others' points of view. The school plans well to enable pupils to make personal choices in ways that are relevant to them. These include opportunities to learn new skills through attending a college course or to become more independent by spending time in the residential facility managed by the school.

Exciting activities, supported well by partners such as the Urdd and the Lead Creative Schools Scheme, enable pupils to use their imagination creatively and productively. These include art projects, the outcomes of which the school proudly displays on its corridors, and valuable opportunities for music and performance.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well through the curriculum, assemblies and a wide range of stimulating community visits and initiatives. There are useful opportunities each day for pupils to get together to develop their understanding of right and wrong and reflect on their feelings and beliefs.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Excellent

The headteacher provides outstanding strategic leadership for the school. He has developed a coherent strategic vision for pupils' education that places the most important needs of pupils at the heart of all aspects of the school's work. At the heart of this is an innovative approach to developing pupils' communication and behaviour skills from the earliest stage of their education. This enables nearly all pupils to access a broader curriculum over time and to make very strong progress in their learning and wellbeing from their individual starting points. The school's vision drives a highly effective culture of continuous improvement through rigorous self-evaluation, outstanding collaboration and highly successful professional learning.

Senior leaders work effectively as a team to analyse the findings of self-evaluation to plan further improvements. This has secured consistent progress in improving behaviour management, professional learning and vocational education programmes. Staff at all levels support school improvement very well. For example, middle leaders ensure the effective implementation of the literacy and numeracy framework. The well-considered allocation of duties at all levels of the staffing structure helps the school to run efficiently on a day-to-day basis and meet the very wide range of its pupils' needs successfully.

The school works exceptionally well with an extensive range of partners. This includes work over many years with a local university to develop innovative approaches to behaviour management. This programme draws on relevant research findings and the work of highly effective behaviour analysts. They identify pupils' needs accurately and use this information to generate bespoke support packages for individual pupils and high quality professional development for staff. This work has a powerful impact on standards of behaviour and pupils' progress at the school. The school shares this work successfully with schools internationally, for example through conferences in the United States of America.

Valuable partnerships, for example with the speech and language therapy service, support staff development very well. This strengthens the school's capacity to provide high quality provision for pupils, which has an extremely positive impact on pupils' communication skills. Leaders collaborate well with other local education providers, for example, with the local further education college. This helps pupils to transfer very successfully to other settings for their education after they leave the school. Effective joint planning of this work makes sure that the school's provision meets pupils' needs and aspirations for their futures.

Across the school, staff show a strong commitment to professional reflection and learning. Staff take good advantage of opportunities to apply newly learnt skills when working with pupils in lessons. For example, teachers who have recently completed the outstanding teacher programme adapt lessons to provide the right level of challenge for all pupils. However, the school does not capitalise well enough on opportunities to share this practice.

The school invests in the development of staff to meet its current and future needs particularly well. For example, the school has supported teaching assistants to qualify as teachers and has facilitated day-release for staff to complete university accredited training courses. Leaders take full advantage of opportunities to strengthen the school's staffing, for example by using initiatives such as the graduate teacher programme.

The school deploys its financial resources very successfully to support school improvement. The modern purpose-built school provides an exceptional learning environment that supports the development of pupils' social and life skills very well. It makes effective use of the pupil development grant to mitigate the impact of poverty and social disadvantage. For example, the school has used this funding to develop helpful approaches to person centred planning and to improve opportunities for family liaison. This develops a greater awareness of how all adults can support pupils more successfully at school and at home.

Governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They use this information well to support and challenge the school. For example, they work diligently to identify ways to improve financial efficiencies to create greater capacity to support school improvement and meet pupils' needs. Governors lead the school's joint management board, which oversees aspects of the school's residential facility. This enables them to keep the impact of this provision and services under review very effectively.

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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