



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

A report on

**Ysgol Ardudwy
Ffordd y Traeth
Harlech
Gwynedd
LL46 2UH**

Date of inspection: December 2018

by

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

About Ysgol Ardudwy

Ysgol Ardudwy is a bilingual secondary school for 11-16 year old pupils. It is situated in the seaside town of Harlech in the north-west of Gwynedd. The school serves the coastal communities of Penrhyndeudraeth, Harlech and Barmouth, and the surrounding rural villages.

There are 319 pupils on roll, compared with 330 at the time of the last inspection in 2012. Nearly all pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds. Thirty four per cent (34%) of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes, and 89% speak Welsh fluently. Approximately 13% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the national figure of 16%. Twenty three per cent (23%) of pupils are on the school's additional learning needs register, which is higher than the national average. Four per cent of pupils have a statement of additional learning needs, which is higher than the national figure.

The senior leadership team includes an acting headteacher and two link members of the senior leadership team. The acting headteacher has been in post since September 2018.

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

Ysgol Ardudwy is a close and caring community that provides valuable support and guidance to its pupils. As a result, there is a nurturing and supportive ethos, and most pupils feel safe at school. Most pupils are polite and treat their peers, staff and visitors with respect, and these pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.

Most teachers have a constructive working relationship with pupils. However, in many lessons, teachers do not do enough to ensure that pupils make strong progress in terms of their skills, knowledge and understanding. They do not plan in enough detail to ensure that the level of challenge is suitable for all pupils, including those who are most able. The school's curriculum is appropriate, but provision to develop pupils' literacy skills is weak. These factors have led to poor performance in the key stage 4 performance indicators which include Welsh, English and mathematics. The school's performance in these indicators has been significantly lower than in similar schools over the last three years.

The school has faced a challenging period in terms of leadership, following the departure of the headteacher and chair of governors in September 2018. Following an urgent restructure, the deputy headteacher was appointed as acting headteacher and, very recently, two members of staff have been appointed as link members of the senior leadership team. The acting headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which is based on raising standards, ensuring pupils' wellbeing and improving the quality of teaching. However, the acting headteacher is the only full-time member of the senior management team and, over time, leadership at all levels has not succeeded in raising and maintaining high standards or improving the quality of teaching.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Improve standards in key stage 4
- R2 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment
- R3 Improve provision to develop pupils' literacy skills
- R4 Improve the quality and effect of leadership at all levels
- R5 Improve the use of findings from self-evaluation activities to plan improvement

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will produce an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection. Estyn will review the school's progress every term.

Main findings

Standards: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Overall, in their lessons, a majority of pupils recall previous learning appropriately and make suitable progress in their understanding and subject skills. However, over the last three years, pupils' achievement in key stage 4 in the indicators that include Welsh, English and mathematics, has been significantly lower than in similar schools.

In most lessons, pupils listen attentively and respectfully to the teacher and to other pupils' contributions. Many pupils respond suitably to the teacher's questions and use correct technical terminology. However, only a few pupils provide extended responses, and a minority of pupils are reticent pupils who are reluctant to contribute orally to the lesson or group work. Overall, a majority of pupils have a sound grasp of spoken Welsh. However, a minority of pupils who study their subjects through the medium of Welsh have a tendency to turn to English when discussing their work in lessons.

A majority of pupils locate facts or identify the features of authors' styles successfully when reading short pieces of factual or literary texts. For example, in their history lessons, Year 9 pupils show suitable reading skills when gathering and checking information about conscription during the First World War. However, only a very few pupils show higher order reading skills, for example making comparisons, summarising and drawing conclusions effectively.

On the whole, a majority of pupils arrange their extended written work suitably and use paragraphs appropriately. A minority of pupils write effectively for different purposes and audiences. For example, in their history lessons, pupils write a purposeful diary about the life and work of a miner at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, a majority of pupils' writing skills are weak. Their range of vocabulary is limited and there are spelling and grammar errors throughout their written work.

Across the age range, a majority of pupils have suitable number skills. In mathematics lessons, a few more able pupils show strong number skills, for example when using efficient methods to calculate percentage changes. A majority of pupils apply their data-handling skills effectively to a variety of situations. For example, in geography lessons, they use data on the prosperity of two countries to draw suitable graphs and then use this information to make appropriate comparisons. However, a majority of pupils do not apply their number skills successfully to solve everyday problems, as they do not have a sound understanding of topics or they have not had enough of solving problems based on everyday life.

Overall, pupils develop their creative and physical skills appropriately. For example, in art lessons, pupils create 2D patterns on paper successfully and carve their patterns into polystyrene in order to print on paper in black and white. In science lessons, pupils work skilfully and thoughtfully when completing practical work to investigate the power output of wind turbines.

A minority of pupils develop their thinking skills appropriately. A few more able pupils show well-developed thinking skills. For example, they consider a number of factors when comparing the tsunami in the Southern Ocean in 2004 with the one in Japan in 2011. However, overall, a majority of pupils do not develop their thinking skills well enough.

In a variety of subjects, pupils make sound progress in developing their information and communication technology (ICT) skills. For example, in their design and technology lessons, pupils use design software successfully to create two- and three-dimensional plans of sustainable homes. In science lessons, they create a purposeful video to present information and the arguments for and against wind turbines, and use spreadsheets to analyse financial data effectively in their business lessons.

Over the last three years, the school's performance in many of the performance indicators in key stage 4 has declined. Over this period, performance in the Level 2 indicator, including Welsh or English and mathematics, has fallen, and has been consistently lower than in similar schools. In two of the last three years, performance has been significantly lower than in similar schools. Over the same period, the school's performance in the capped points score has been broadly in line with that seen in similar schools.

The percentage of pupils who have succeeded in gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-A or equivalent has fallen over the last three years, and is lower than in other similar schools over the last two years.

Over the last three years, girls' performance has compared favourably with the performance of girls in similar schools in many indicators. However, over the same period, boys' performance has declined and is lower than in similar schools in many indicators. Over the last three years, the performance of the few pupils who are eligible for free school meals has compared favourably with the performance of the same group of pupils in similar schools in most indicators.

At the end of Year 11, most pupils gain a GCSE qualification in Welsh. Many gain a Welsh first language qualification, with the majority of these pupils gaining a level 2 qualification.

No pupils have left the school without qualifications for over four years and, at the end of Year 11, nearly all pupils remain in education, training or employment.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

The nurturing and supportive ethos at Ysgol Ardudwy promotes high levels of wellbeing successfully. As a result, most pupils feel safe at school and many are confident that the school deals effectively with any problems or rare cases of bullying. Most pupils are polite and treat their peers, staff and visitors with respect. These pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.

Many pupils settle quickly and show a willingness to learn at the beginning of the lesson. A majority of pupils show appropriate interest in their work. They are hard-working and concentrate throughout the lesson. However, only a few pupils show real enthusiasm in their learning. A minority of pupils, particularly boys, are overly

passive learners who are reluctant to contribute to activities. Overall, pupils are too reliant on guidance from teachers and do not nurture their independent learning skills adequately. Many do not show ambition to improve their work.

Many pupils have a sound understanding of how to stay healthy through diet and exercise activities, such as the climbing club and a wide range of team sport clubs. Most pupils have a suitable understanding of e-safety, and many pupils believe that the school helps them to understand other backgrounds, faiths and traditions clearly.

Many pupils play a prominent part in decision-making at the school and develop their leadership skills appropriately in doing so. Since September 2018, pupils have an increasing influence on the school's day-to-day life. The school council makes a suitable contribution to the school's improvement decisions, for example the new behaviour management strategy and the cost of food in the canteen. Members of the council also develop their leadership skills and their awareness of children's rights by engaging effectively with the Children's Commissioner for Wales's ambassador scheme. The eco council has a positive influence on reducing the use of plastic and manages the recycling provision. The Welsh Language Council has begun the work of promoting Welshness in the school purposefully. The school's pupils make a valuable contribution to the community by raising money regularly for local and national charities, such as Blue Sky and Wales Air Ambulance.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Most teachers have a constructive working relationship with pupils and manage behaviour effectively. Many have sound subject knowledge. They are clear communicators and consistently good language models. In a few lessons, teachers plan beneficial activities, which ensure that pupils make strong progress in their subject knowledge and skills. In a very few lessons, teachers adapt their plans skilfully based on effective assessment of pupils' previous progress.

Many teachers provide suitable activities for the beginning and end of lessons, and vary activities purposefully in order to keep pupils busy and on task. However, in many cases, teachers do not plan lessons carefully enough to ensure that the level of challenge is suitable for all pupils. In these lessons, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough, or they do not give sufficient consideration to pupils' previous achievement when planning. As a result, these lessons do not succeed in engaging pupils' interest, and the tempo of learning is often too slow. This has a detrimental effect on the standards that pupils, including those who are more able, achieve.

In a few lessons, teachers ask incisive and probing questions in order to deepen pupils' understanding. However, in many lessons, teachers do not challenge pupils to extend their responses and develop their oral skills and subject knowledge.

A majority of teachers provide relevant and constructive feedback, which provides pupils with useful guidance on how to improve the standard of their work. However, a minority of teachers' comments are not analytical enough and they do not address specifically enough the weaknesses of individual pupils. Overall, teachers do not expect pupils to respond purposefully enough to their comments. When pupils respond, a few teachers do not check their responses carefully enough.

The curriculum builds appropriately on pupils' learning from previous key stages. The school works successfully with a local school and further education college to enrich the key stage 4 curriculum. A wide variety of courses is provided that is relevant to pupils' needs and interests, such as agriculture, engineering, photography and childcare.

The school provides an appropriate selection of extra-curricular activities that support the curriculum. These include trips and educational visits to local and international destinations, science projects with Techniquest, the annual activity week and clubs such as the popular drama club and homework club.

The school's provision for developing pupils' understanding of local and Welsh culture is appropriate. For example, as part of the creative schools project, Year 7 pupils studied the effect of the Second World War on the Harlech area. The school succeeds in ensuring that nearly all pupils who have received Welsh-medium education continue to study their courses through the medium of Welsh. Provision for latecomers to the Welsh language is effective and ensures that these pupils make good progress in their Welsh language skills, with many gaining a level 2 qualification.

In relevant subjects, the school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum, particularly their data-handling and graph skills. In many cases, the challenge in these tasks is suitable for pupils of all abilities. For example, in science, Year 7 pupils are given opportunities to use graphs to investigate the relationships between different variables. However, the school does not provide enough opportunities, in mathematics or across the curriculum, for pupils to develop their ability to solve numerical problems based on everyday situations.

On the whole, there are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills across the curriculum. They are provided with opportunities to use a wide range of software, including appropriate opportunities to develop their ICT skills in data-handling and modelling.

In a few subjects, there is suitable provision to develop pupils' literacy skills. However, overall, provision to develop pupils' literacy skills is weak. The shortcomings in teachers' questioning skills mean that pupils are not given opportunities to give extended answers and, by doing so, develop their oral skills. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills, particularly their higher order reading skills, such as reasoning and drawing a conclusion. Overall, opportunities and guidance to develop pupils' ability to write at length for different purposes and audiences are limited.

The school makes suitable use of data from a range of baseline tests to identify pupils who need support with their literacy skills, and there are appropriate interventions in place to improve these pupils' literacy skills. There are no consistent arrangements to support pupils who need support with developing their numeracy skills.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

The school is a close-knit and caring community that provides valuable support and guidance to its pupils. All staff know the pupils well and make beneficial use of this

knowledge in order to foster a supportive ethos that promotes pupils' wellbeing successfully. As a result, pupils behave well and treat each other and others with respect.

The school's arrangements for monitoring pupils' attendance are effective. Through successful co-operation with parents and the welfare officer, the school's attendance has improved over the last three years and, in 2018, it compared favourably with that of similar schools.

The school has robust arrangements for supporting pupils with emotional, health and social needs. The inclusion unit provides them with a calm and safe environment, and co-ordinates relevant support from external agencies, in line with pupils' individual needs.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is appropriate. The school makes good use of support staff to provide appropriate support for these pupils. However, the school does not track the progress of these pupils against their individual targets well enough.

Very recently, the school has strengthened whole-school and departmental progress-tracking systems. The new arrangements are appropriate and enable leaders to identify individuals and specific groups of pupils who are underachieving. However, over time, the school's arrangements for setting targets and tracking pupils' progress in the core subjects, in particular, have not been effective.

Purposeful interim and annual reports are presented to parents. These include useful information about pupils' progress, and identify their strengths and weaknesses.

There is appropriate provision for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is done through school assemblies, guest speakers and a suitable and comprehensive personal and social education programme. Pupils are given appropriate opportunities to develop their understanding of equality and diversity. For example, the school's young ambassadors have taken part in a parade in Harlech with the local Member of Parliament in order to raise awareness of social issues in the community. The school has useful links with individuals and external agencies, who contribute to the personal and social education programme, for example the Red Cross, the fire service and a homelessness charity. The police community support officer visits regularly to discuss and ask about issues that are of interest to pupils.

The personal and social education programme contributes purposefully to developing pupils' understanding of how to live healthily. The school canteen provides pupils with a suitable range of healthy food and drink. There are also many valuable extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to take part in sports and fitness activities, for example the running club, the kayaking club and the rugby, netball and football teams.

The school provides purposeful opportunities for pupils to influence decisions in relation to school life. The school council is an active and enthusiastic body that has contributed to improvements in the school, including changes to the pupils' summer uniform, the new code of conduct since September 2018 and reducing the use of plastic.

The school provides appropriate advice and guidance for pupils to make suitable choices at the end of each key stage. The school works effectively with agencies and the local further education college to provide taster opportunities and suitable information about courses and apprenticeships. Pupils are given useful support in order to prepare them to take the next step in their lives.

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

Leadership and management: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

The school has faced a challenging period in terms of leadership, following the sudden departure of the headteacher and chair of governors in September 2018. Following an urgent restructure, the deputy headteacher was appointed as acting headteacher and, very recently, two link members were appointed to the internal senior management team. A school support working party, which includes authority officers and headteachers of nearby schools, has also been established to support the senior management team. However, the acting headteacher is the only substantive member of the senior leadership team. As a result, the senior leadership team does not have enough capacity or time to operate strategically.

The acting headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which is based on raising standards, ensuring pupils' wellbeing and improving the quality of teaching. On the whole, the school's staff share this vision, although there is some ambiguity. Since September 2018, the acting headteacher has succeeded in creating a sense of purposeful co-operation within one effective team. He has also led and established strategies that have succeeded in improving pupils' behaviour and internal communication.

The school has restructured middle managers' duties appropriately in order to try to ensure effective leadership for skills, reorganise the responsibilities of heads of year to focus on educational standards, and support the acting headteacher. However, the acting headteacher's leadership responsibilities include too many operational responsibilities. This limits the time he has to operate strategically. Although changes in leadership have led to a few short-term improvements, leadership at all levels has not succeeded in raising and maintaining high standards or improving the quality of teaching over the last four years.

The acting headteacher has established suitable management procedures. A programme of suitable meetings was established in September 2018, which focus on pupils' standards. Minutes of meetings include useful action points and suitable follow-up. However, departmental meetings do not focus sufficiently on the quality of teaching. On the whole, the school's performance management systems are appropriate. There is a clear link between individuals' priorities and the school's strategic priorities. However, over time, leaders at all levels have not held those that they lead to account well enough for their work.

Leaders make appropriate use of performance data to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The school has a calendar of useful self-evaluation activities. However, overall, leaders at all levels do not use the information that is gathered from self-evaluation activities effectively enough to plan for improvement or evaluate the quality and effect of their work correctly.

The school's governors are supportive and develop their understanding of the school's work by strengthening their link with departments. They manage the school's funding appropriately. However, over time, the governing body has not challenged the school sufficiently to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching.

Up to September 2018, leaders have not supported the professional development of members of the school's staff well enough. During recent years, there have been very few opportunities to discuss and share good practice in terms of teaching and learning. These shortcomings have had a detrimental effect on standards of teaching and learning at the school. Since September 2018, the school has responded positively to the situation and has planned purposeful internal and external training in order to raise standards.

The acting headteacher and governors manage funding and resources appropriately. The school does not have a deficit and has a small amount of money in reserve. It has taken robust action to ensure that the school has sufficient learning resources and purposeful accommodation. Grants are used appropriately to support the most vulnerable pupils. Over time, this has contributed to the high achievement of pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

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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