



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

A report on

**Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn
Newcastle Emlyn
Carmarthenshire
SA38 9LN**

Date of inspection: December 2018

by

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

About Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn

Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn is an 11 to 18 comprehensive school situated in the town of Newcastle Emlyn and maintained by Carmarthenshire local authority. The school is categorised as 'English-medium with significant Welsh'. Around 65% of pupils complete their primary education through the medium of Welsh.

Pupils come to the school from Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion. Currently, the school has 500 learners, including 93 in the sixth form. This is notably less than at the time of the last core inspection. The current proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 16.7%, which is close to the national average.

The school receives pupils from the full range of ability. A very few pupils are from a minority ethnic background and none receive support for English as an additional language. Just over 20% of pupils have an additional learning need and a little less than 5% of pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which is above the national average of 2.2%.

Forty-two per cent of pupils speak Welsh fluently and 16.4% speak Welsh at home at home. Sixty-two per cent of Ysgol Emlyn's pupils are taught Welsh as a first language. At key stage 3, pupils are able to study design and technology, history, music and art through the medium of Welsh. Apart from Welsh GCSE, no pupils follow any subjects in key stage 4 in Welsh.

The headteacher has been in post since 2013. He is supported by three assistant headteachers on a full time basis and one other who works for 80% of the time.

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 Gyfun Emlyn has an inclusive and welcoming ethos. During the last three years, leaders have increased their focus on the quality of teaching, tracking of pupils' performance and the standards they achieve in lessons. This has led to improved outcomes in key stage 4 and to consistently high levels of literacy skills. However, leaders do not ensure that pupils previously educated through the medium of Welsh make enough progress in their command of the Welsh language.

In general, the quality of teaching across the school is high. Many pupils display positive attitudes to their learning. These pupils enjoy coming to school, they work well with one another and make strong progress in their skills and subject knowledge. However, in a few cases, pupils, do not display positive attitudes to their teachers or their peers. They behave poorly and this disrupts their own learning and that of others.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Improve standards in Welsh and increase the use that pupils make of the language
- R2 Improve pupils' attendance, behaviour and their attitudes to learning, especially in key stage 4
- R3 Plan for the progressive development of pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum
- R4 Strengthen self-evaluation and improvement planning around pupils' attendance, behaviour and use of Welsh
- R5 Address the budget deficit

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Good

In two of the last three years, outcomes for pupils in key stage 4 are close to or better than those in similar schools in the majority of performance indicators. During their time in school, many pupils make strong progress in their knowledge and skills.

Many pupils recall prior learning accurately and develop their understanding of key subject concepts well. For example, in geography, they use their knowledge of hydrology to make predictions about the impact of removing natural defences on coastal settlements. However, in a few cases, pupils, especially the more able, do not make enough progress.

Most pupils have a strong command of the English language and use this well to communicate their ideas in discussions. Over time, they develop their subject specific terminology well. For example, when analysing a speech delivered by F.D. Roosevelt, many pupils develop an understanding of literary devices such as 'hyperbole', 'tripling', 'plosives' and 'asyndetic lists'. A few pupils can discuss sophisticated aspects of language, for example when identifying subordinate clauses in their French lessons. These pupils are able to talk eloquently about a range of topics. However, in a few cases, pupils offer only short, underdeveloped responses to questions or are reluctant to participate in discussions.

A majority of pupils complete their primary education through the medium of Welsh. Many of these pupils lose confidence in their ability to speak Welsh as they progress through school. In lessons conducted in Welsh, they respond only in English to their teachers and to one another. Only a very few pupils show confidence and fluency when using the Welsh language.

Most pupils are competent readers and are able to locate and understand relevant pieces of information to support their learning. Most read aloud with fluency and appropriate expression. In many subjects, pupils develop well their ability to infer meaning from a variety of texts. A few show well developed analysis skills, for example when comparing how different poets represent the experience of being a refugee.

Most pupils produce a great deal of extended writing for a wide range of audiences and purposes. In general, these pupils write with a high degree of accuracy and are able to communicate their ideas coherently. In many cases, pupils redraft their work beneficially, taking careful note of their teachers' advice. In a few cases, pupils show flair and creativity, producing sentences such as, 'A shimmer of light shines through a small, mouldy crack in the ceiling and I realise that it is the start of another working day.' In Welsh, however, a majority of pupils make frequent grammatical and spelling errors.

Most pupils develop their numeracy skills suitably across the curriculum. In general, they have a sound grasp of mathematical techniques although a few show poor recall of multiplication tables. Many pupils are able to construct and plot graphs accurately. They understand well how to identify patterns from data and draw lines of best fit.

These pupils have a sound understanding of proportion and use this well, for example when calculating empirical formulae in chemistry.

In many subjects, pupils use the basic functions of software packages such as word-processing or producing presentations competently. In a few cases they develop more advanced techniques such as making web-pages in their Welsh baccalaureate lessons. However, in general they do not use the more sophisticated aspects of software, such as modelling or the use of formulas within spreadsheets, frequently enough across the curriculum to consolidate or develop their ICT skills.

Many pupils develop their creativity well, especially in their drama, English, art and design technology lessons. A few develop this aspect to a high degree, for example when composing a piece of chamber music in a local young composer competition.

In two of the last three years, performance in the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh and mathematics compares favourably with that in similar schools. Over this time, performance in the capped points score and the proportion of pupils gaining five A*-A at GCSE is close to that in similar schools.

In the sixth form, outcomes at level 3 have been close to those in similar schools since 2016. Over the same period, performance in the wider points score has been consistently better than that in similar schools. The proportion of pupils gaining 3 grades A*-C has been consistently above that in similar schools. The performance at grades A*-A has been variable but above similar schools in two of the last three years.

In two of the last three years, boys' and girls' performance in most performance indicators is close to that of boys and girls in similar schools. Since 2016, the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals is mostly above that of the same group of pupils in similar schools.

Since 2016, pupils with additional learning needs generally perform well against their learning targets.

Pupils' performance in Welsh first language at level 2 is highly variable. Pupils achieved extremely well in 2017 but outcomes declined notably in 2018, mainly due to boys' extremely poor performance. Performance in Welsh second language is mostly in line with the Welsh average although outcomes in 2018 were well below this figure.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Many pupils at Ysgol Gyfun Emlyn feel safe and happy, and know who they can turn to if they require help. Many pupils are polite to one another, to staff and visitors to the school. However, in a few cases pupils' behaviour, especially in key stage 4, is extremely poor and impacts negatively upon other pupils' learning and wellbeing.

Nearly all pupils are punctual to lessons and in many cases they are ready to learn. Many display enthusiasm for learning and are confident when answering questions. For example, they conduct animated discussion in their drama lessons about 'status' and 'characterisation'. Many pupils show high levels of resilience and determination

when given challenging tasks. In a few cases, pupils show curiosity and ask their teachers questions or set themselves research tasks to extend their understanding.

In many cases, pupils behave well in lessons and respond positively to learning activities. However, in a few cases, pupils exhibit extremely challenging and disruptive behaviour. In these instances, pupils do not treat staff or their peers with due respect. This has a detrimental effect on other pupils' learning and their wellbeing. A few pupils feel that other pupils bully them. Many pupils feel that staff deal with these instances suitably, however, a few do not think that these issues are resolved well enough.

The majority of pupils are developing their understanding of how to make healthy choices relating to diet and physical activity well. They benefit from regular participation in a range of extra-curricular activities such as cross country running, netball, hockey, rugby and football. Pupils from the school's inclusion centre benefit greatly from a wheel chair rugby programme.

Many pupils participate beneficially in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The school is very active and successful in a robotic coding competition league both regionally and nationally. Pupils in the sixth form play valuable leadership roles for example they run the school's 'debating club' and the 'dodge-ball club'. Sixth form pupils make a beneficial contribution to school life through the 'Buddy System'. They help specific pupils overcome difficulties with their work or relationships in one-to-one sessions. In addition, they help younger pupils develop their compassion through organising fundraising activities such as the school's annual Charities' Day.

The school council has made positive contributions to making decisions in the school, such as introducing a summer uniform and electronic contact diaries, and improving school toilets. Pupils have recently influenced the content of the school's personal and social education provision, for example the inclusion of mental health sessions to support and promote pupils' wellbeing.

Since 2016, attendance rates have declined. They have been below that in similar schools in the last two years. Provisional data from the school indicates that this downward trend is continuing in key stage 4.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Nearly all teachers are very strong language models. Many establish a strong rapport with pupils and have high expectations of what they can achieve. In many cases, teachers establish beneficial classroom routines and deliver their lessons with warmth, enthusiasm and good humour. In these lessons, most pupils make strong progress in their skills and their subject knowledge.

In many cases, teachers plan their lessons carefully. They know their pupils well and adapt learning activities to match their ability. Their lessons capture pupils' interest and include activities that have a progressive level of challenge. In these lessons, teachers plan beneficial key points to check pupils' understanding and correct any misconceptions.

In a minority of cases, teachers are passionate about their subjects and have extremely high expectations of pupils. They deliver their lessons with verve and enthusiasm. These teachers plan meticulously to ensure rapid progress and deep understanding. They ask searching questions and follow up pupils' answers with additional questions to develop their thinking and promote their curiosity.

In a few cases, teachers do not plan well enough or have high enough expectations of pupils' behaviour or progress. These teachers offer pupils simple tasks that keep them busy but do not promote progress. In these cases, pupils frequently disengage themselves from learning and behave poorly as a result.

In many cases, teachers make effective use of questioning to check pupils' recall and understanding. However, in a few instances, teachers do not ask enough open questions or they answer their own questions. These shortcomings restrict the opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking skills and independence. Only in a very few cases do teachers encourage pupils who are fluent in Welsh to respond in Welsh.

Many teachers offer pupils useful verbal and written feedback on the quality of their work and correct any misconceptions sensitively. They ensure that pupils are clear about the criteria necessary for high quality work. In a majority of cases, they give pupils tailored additional tasks or opportunities to redraft their work beneficially. In a few cases, however, teachers offer only perfunctory comments that do not help pupils improve their work.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum which meets the needs and aspirations of most learners. In key stage 4 and the sixth form, the school offers pupils a wide range of options that include suitable academic and vocational courses.

The school's inclusion units work well to develop specific pupils' literacy and numeracy skills together with their life skills. For example, they go food shopping, learn how to swim and work in a ten pin bowling venue.

Learning experiences in many subject areas are stimulating and interesting. For example, in English, pupils are given beneficial opportunities to research on Jewish life before the holocaust and make comparisons with current affairs such as the situation in the Middle East and Donald Trump's attitude towards Mexico. In addition, the school offers a rich variety of extra-curricular such as the coding, French and Spanish Clubs. There are many beneficial opportunities for pupils to expand their horizons in educational visits, for example to the Art galleries and cultural visits to Barcelona.

The school has mapped the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum well. Beneficial opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills are consistently integrated in all subject areas. There are purposeful opportunities for developing pupils' numeracy skills in many relevant subjects including 'numeracy challenges' in design and technology and challenging calculations in science. The school monitors pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy closely and plans useful interventions for those pupils with weaker skills.

A minority of subjects provide students with suitable opportunities to use their basic ICT skills. However, the school's planning to develop pupils' ICT skills is at an early stage.

The school provides pupils with appropriate opportunities to develop their appreciation of Welsh heritage and culture, for example through discussing the drowning of Capel Celyn and Tryweryn to create dams. Since 2015, the proportion of pupils entered for the GCSE Welsh first language course at the end of key stage 4 has increased suitably.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

Many aspects of the school's provision for care, support and guidance promote pupils' wellbeing appropriately. In general, there is an inclusive and nurturing ethos within the school. However, the implementation of the school's procedures to ensure positive behaviour and improve attendance has not been effective enough.

The school has developed a comprehensive tracking system to monitor the academic progress of individuals and groups of pupils across all key stages. This provides staff with a valuable oversight of pupils' performance throughout the year. The information from these systems is used well to track the progress of all pupils and identify an appropriate range of interventions for those who require additional support. This has contributed to the improved outcomes in many key indicators at key stage 4 in the last two years.

Pastoral staff use an appropriate range of strategies, including engaging with parents and outside agencies, to address absenteeism. They strive to raise pupils' awareness of the impact of regular attendance on their progress suitably through assemblies, corridor displays and a reward system. However, the school's system of sanctions and rewards to promote attendance has not been successful enough, especially in key stage 4.

The school has clear procedures for tracking and monitoring behaviour and makes suitable use of an online homework, behaviour and attendance system. This enables staff to promptly reward good behaviour or effort and keep parents informed about their child's conduct. A majority of teachers apply the behaviour policy effectively. However, a minority do not do so. As a result, pupils do not always engage positively with their work. A few behave very poorly and this disrupts their own learning and that of others. This is especially the case in key stage 4. The school takes suitable measures to raise awareness of how to prevent bullying through the personal and social education programme and assemblies. However, the school's anti-bullying procedures do not give all pupils enough confidence that any incidents will be dealt with effectively.

The learning support department provides a high level of sensitive and caring provision for pupils with additional learning needs. This is a notable strength. Teaching and support staff provide valuable assistance to help these pupils integrate effectively into school life while providing an alternative curriculum that develops their life skills. This enables them to develop their confidence, feel safe and contributes to their strong outcomes. Individual plans contain relevant short term objectives to

address pupils' literacy, numeracy, behavioural and social needs. However, this information is not used effectively enough by a few staff.

The school collaborates well with a wide range of external agencies to provide appropriate help to address the special educational needs of specific pupils, and to provide support for vulnerable pupils. Further effective support within the school is provided by the pastoral support officer who works sensitively with disengaged or emotionally vulnerable pupils.

The school supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively through a comprehensive and well planned programme of personal and social education. This also covers a wide range of topical issues, such as conflict resolution, mental health awareness and money management. This programme also includes valuable learning activities to help pupils make positive eating and drinking choices.

The school promotes physical activity well and pupils get a wide range of opportunities to exercise including through basketball, badminton and spinning clubs. The school offers numerous opportunities for pupils to engage beneficially in creative and cultural activities. These include an annual musical show, a school Eisteddfod, and visits to Llangrannog and the Hay Festival.

The school provides suitable guidance for pupils at the end of key stage 3 and key stage 4 to help them make informed decisions about their future learning and career choices. The school offers pupils in Year 12 valuable opportunities to undertake work experience placements. In addition, the school assists parents to support their child's learning by providing worthwhile information leaflets about the curriculum, homework and relevant advice about bullying and attendance.

Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and there are no significant areas for concern.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The Headteacher and the senior leadership team work together closely to develop a clear vision for the school based on the creation of 'an outstanding school where all are welcome, happy, valued and achieve their full potential'. This vision is shared suitably and understood by staff and parents. Leaders have focussed their efforts appropriately on raising pupils' attainment and developing their literacy skills. As a result, there has been strong progress in these areas. However, leaders have not been successful enough in improving pupils' attendance or in securing consistently good behaviour in key stage 4. In addition, leaders have not set out their expectations for how teachers should promote pupils' use of the Welsh language clearly enough.

The senior leadership team have appropriate roles and responsibilities. They are well understood by staff. Their line management responsibilities are clear and distributed appropriately. Line management meetings with subject leaders are supportive and include an appropriate level of challenge for improving standards. However, these meetings do not place enough emphasis on improving behaviour or the quality of teaching.

Senior leaders and governors have responded to the national priority of improving pupils' literacy particularly well. They have also succeeded in increasing the proportion of pupils who are entered for a Welsh first language qualification. However, they do not promote the benefits of bilingualism enough and do not encourage pupils to use the language consistently.

Governors are very supportive of the school. They have a broad understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are gaining a useful understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement within specific subjects through their link governor activities.

The school has appropriate systems for managing the performance of its staff. There are suitable opportunities for staff to discuss their performance and progress with their line managers which lead to relevant professional development opportunities.

The majority of subject leaders understand their areas of responsibility and lead their departments well. However, there is a wide variation in the effectiveness of subject leaders in securing high standards. A minority of these leaders do not understand the strengths and weaknesses of teaching in their areas of responsibility well enough in order to plan for improvement.

The school has broadly appropriate systems to manage its finances and expenditure. However, the school has a substantial deficit budget and is working with the local authority to remedy the situation. The school has an appropriate number of teaching and support staff to deliver the curriculum. Most teachers teach their main subject specialism. The school uses grant funding appropriately to support pupils' needs. It provides helpful interventions, lunchtime clubs and revision sessions to support individual pupils. These have contributed to positive outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals in key stage 4 but have not had sufficient impact on their attendance.

Overall, leaders use information gathered from self-evaluation activities such as the analysis of performance data, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work, suitably to plan improvements. They make beneficial use of the views of pupils, parents, staff and members of the governing body. As a result, senior leaders have a sound understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement within the school.

The school sets ambitious targets for nearly all performance indicators. Many improvement plans link well with priorities identified through self-evaluation. Overall, planning for improvement has had a positive impact on outcomes in key stage 4 and pupils' literacy skills. However, leaders do not evaluate standards of behaviour and pupils' attitudes to learning accurately enough. Progress leaders do not evaluate the impact of their work rigorously enough and they do not make formal plans for improvement. They have not had enough impact on improving attendance or in securing the good behaviour of pupils, especially in key stage 4.

Leaders at the school plan suitably for the professional learning of staff. The school is developing a valuable culture of collaborative learning. For example, all staff are involved in regular 'masterclasses'. These provide beneficial development opportunities to work on projects related to the school's improvement priorities, such

as literacy, numeracy and ICT. Teaching staff receive suitable opportunities to share good practice or observe others teach.

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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