



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

A report on

**Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmbrân
Henllys Way
St Dials
Cwmbran
Torfaen
NP44 4HB**

Date of inspection: May 2019

by

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

About Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmbrân

Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmbrân is situated on the outskirts of the town of Cwmbran in Torfaen local authority. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work. There are 386 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including 56 part-time nursery age pupils. Pupils are organised into nine single age classes and four mixed-age classes.

Over a three-year-period, around 20% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. This is higher than the national percentage of 18%. Very few pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes or ethnic minority backgrounds. The school has identified 21.9% of pupils as having additional learning needs. This is similar to the national percentage of 21%.

The school is currently a pioneer school, and is working with Welsh Government and other schools to proceed with developments in relation to the curriculum.

The school was last inspected in November 2011 and the current headteacher was appointed in January 2016.

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

The school is a happy community where most pupils make good progress from their starting points. It provides numerous experiences for pupils to expand their skills, knowledge and understanding effectively. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning, and concentrate and persevere well for extended periods. Most pupils behave well, both in the classroom and around the school. They are very caring towards each other, and treat adults and visitors maturely and with respect and courtesy.

The headteacher provides robust and effective leadership to staff and pupils, which ensures a clear strategic direction for the school and a culture that promotes continuous improvement. Staff are dedicated and enthusiastic, and work very well together to ensure that the school has a very caring ethos. A strong emphasis is placed on developing pupils' emotional wellbeing by adapting provision creatively. Governors support the school well.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the fluency of pupils' spoken Welsh
- R2 Plan appropriate opportunities for pupils in the foundation phase to make choices in relation to their learning, so that they develop as independent learners
- R3 Improve the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work

What happens next

The school will produce an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to the effect of its provision on pupils' wellbeing by improving their emotional wellbeing, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

On entry to the school, many pupils' literacy skills are lower than expected for their age. As they move through the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make sound progress and achieve well by Year 6.

Although Welsh is a new language to most pupils on entry to the school, many pupils' oral skills are developing effectively in the nursery class. Across the foundation phase, many use an increasing range of purposeful vocabulary in various situations. They listen attentively to instructions from adults and respect other pupils' views. Many pupils in key stage 2 build well on this firm foundation and speak confidently in a range of contexts. At the top of key stage 2, most pupils communicate fluently in English. They use rich and extensive vocabulary to create effect, for example when discussing Shackleton's expedition. However, a majority of pupils across the school do not use spoken Welsh fluently enough. Most pupils have developed good listening skills and respect other people's views when discussing various topics, for example the effect of wind turbines on the environment.

Many pupils enjoy reading and make good progress. The youngest pupils recognise letters and sounds correctly. By Year 2, many read meaningfully with expression and discuss the content of their books confidently. In key stage 2, many read a range of texts in Welsh and English with good understanding. By the end of the stage, most express an opinion about books and authors confidently and respond to the content and style of poems skilfully. Most pupils use their reading skills successfully to gather information and present it in an interesting way, for example when presenting a speech about the future of the orang-utan.

Most pupils' early writing skills in the first classes are developing positively. They use varied vocabulary and language increasingly in Years 1 and 2. By the end of the foundation phase, most write independently for different purposes, for example when writing instructions for building a house. In key stage 2, many pupils present their ideas effectively and show a sound grasp of spelling patterns, paragraphing and punctuation in both languages. Many pupils at the top of the school create imaginative pieces regularly, for example when writing a compassionate monologue by a resident of Tryweryn. However, the quality of handwriting and presentation of work of a majority of pupils across the school is untidy.

Many pupils have a sound understanding of mathematical concepts. In the foundation phase, many handle money correctly and develop a good understanding of measurement, shape, time and data, for example when creating a bar graph to record information about their favourite animals. In key stage 2, most apply their skills purposefully across the curriculum and develop robust strategies, for example when solving problems relating to the cost of a voyage from Liverpool to Patagonia. By Year 6, most pupils' numeracy skills are sound, and more able pupils make good progress. They apply their mental calculation strategies effectively and use the four rules to calculate the cost of admission to a castle. They use and analyse data highly intelligently, for example when evaluating the skills of different famous footballers.

Many pupils across the school show confidence when discussing information and communication technology (ICT) work. In the foundation phase, they control a movable toy effectively and use data programs confidently to create graphs about sea creatures. In key stage 2, most create multimedia presentations confidently to present their work, for example when discussing the effect of developing the M4 motorway through a nature reserve. They also use spreadsheets successfully to create various graphs to compile information.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel happy and safe there, and appreciate the caring and friendly environment. Most pupils are happy that staff respond positively to any concerns they may have, and that the 'worry box' and school 'drop-in' sessions are useful in supporting them with this. Older pupils are caring towards foundation pupils as they help them on the playground during play time.

Most pupils are polite towards staff and each other, and have positive attitudes towards their work. They are enthusiastic and persevere diligently with tasks. A good example of this is the way in which most Year 6 pupils strengthen their understanding of the effectiveness of energy drinks on the body in a science session. Many develop perseverance and resilience purposefully, and use the 'ask a friend or partner before asking the teacher' strategy to support them when they need help. Across the school, the majority of pupils stay on tasks for suitable periods and, overall, behave well in lessons. Most pupils in key stage 2 work sensibly with a partner and in small groups, for example when planning new cycling routes for Geraint Thomas.

Most pupils in key stage 2 have begun to suggest interesting ideas about what they would like to learn during prompting days. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils study the features of Snowdon as part of their theme, 'Cawsom Wlad i'w chadw' ('We were given a country to care for'). Many pupils in key stage 2 develop sound strategies to improve their own work. Although only a few pupils in the foundation phase respond to teachers' comments, they have begun to contribute to the afternoon challenges, and their independent working skills are developing appropriately.

Many pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 shoulder roles of responsibility purposefully. Those who are on the numerous committees undertake their work conscientiously. For example, through the work of the digital leaders, many pupils understand clearly how to stay safe online, and key stage 2 pupils extend their ICT skills well during their weekly club. By being active in school and the local community, the eco council promotes sustainability effectively. Many pupils have sound knowledge of the wider world; for example, they discuss the facilities of farmers who grow fair trade fruit and vegetables very intelligently. By supporting the school council's activities to raise money for various charities, such as diabetes, and by contributing to a local food bank, many pupils develop as moral and conscientious citizens. They have a sound understanding of social issues and a broad awareness of the needs of others within the school community and beyond.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of how to stay healthy, and pupils of all ages understand how to make sensible choices in relation to diet, physical exercise

and emotional wellbeing. Most pupils take regular advantage of opportunities to take part in rich extra-curricular activities and numerous clubs. This has a positive effect on their personal and social skills, in addition to developing their self-confidence and fitness successfully.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

All staff have a good working relationship with pupils, which fosters a positive and supportive environment for learning. Respect between pupils and adults is an important feature of the school's work. Teachers make valuable use of support staff and, together, they support learning effectively. As a result, many pupils make very good progress in lessons. Staff are sensitive to pupils' needs, and their encouragement for learners' wellbeing develops their confidence successfully. All members of staff use strategies to promote good behaviour consistently across the school and, as a result, most pupils behave well.

Teachers work together purposefully on both key stages to ensure that all pupils receive a broad and rich range of learning experiences. Cross-curricular themes are beginning to extend pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding effectively. This has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes to learning.

Many teachers ensure that their lessons have a good pace. They set clear learning objectives and use a range of interesting resources to engage pupils' interest. In the best example, teachers set challenging tasks that enable pupils to use their previous knowledge and thinking skills, for example to seek the views of different people who were part of the Aberfan disaster. However, teachers' expectations of what pupils achieve are inconsistent across the school.

Teachers' oral and written feedback focuses well on how pupils can improve their work. Through short periods of regular reflection in lessons, key stage 2 pupils are developing a sound understanding of what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work further. They show good resilience and perseverance to improve specific aspects of their work.

The whole school has begun to plan purposefully in line with the requirements of the new curriculum for Wales. Key stage 2 pupils plan successfully with teachers during prompting days, and make specific choices about what they would like to learn and how they will do that. Teachers provide pupils with a number of effective opportunities to use their literacy skills across other areas of the curriculum. For example, Year 4 pupils express an opinion confidently in the form of a speech on keeping animals in a zoo. There are purposeful opportunities for pupils to use aspects of their numeracy skills in various subjects, particularly when using data to develop their scientific knowledge and understanding. By planning to implement the digital competence framework, pupils are given robust opportunities to enable them to use their ICT skills in various contexts.

Early years teachers provide purposeful focus tasks and continuous activities for pupils. These include interesting opportunities for them to research, role-play, cook in the mud kitchen and practice their physical skills. However, in the older classes in this phase, many activities are over-directed by adults, which limits the opportunities for pupils to make choices about their own learning. Opportunities that are provided

for pupils to take advantage of the outdoor learning environment, in order to enrich and challenge their learning, are also inconsistent. As a result, pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop and independent and creative learners, or to enrich their oral skills naturally.

The regular opportunities that are provided by all staff to promote Welshness are a natural part of all of the school's work. Staff promote the Welsh dimension successfully through curriculum activities and by providing numerous opportunities for pupils to study their local environment, and by giving attention to the work of Welsh artists and musicians. Provision to encourage pupils to use the Welsh language regularly is purposeful. However, there is no consistency in the way in which all members of staff correct pupils' spoken Welsh in lessons and at other times.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is an inclusive and homely community, in which emphasis is placed on ensuring care and support to all individuals. As a result, nearly all pupils feel safe and take pride in their school.

The school's provision to promote pupils' emotional and mental wellbeing is very effective and is a very positive aspect of its work. Staff provide valuable opportunities for all pupils to understand their emotions, in addition to various issues that have an effect on their mental health. This is highlighted in the natural way in which pupils treat each other and staff. They are encouraged to manage their behaviour well, and to be willing to take risks and apply themselves successfully to their work. As a result, pupils develop robust self-confidence, which enables them to network confidently, for example by visiting a nearby English-medium school to promote Welshness.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development soundly. Staff provide beneficial opportunities for them to reflect in collective worship sessions, and important and appropriate themes, such as anti-bullying, are discussed during theme weeks. The broad provision of wellbeing afternoons provides effective opportunities for pupils to develop as knowledgeable citizens, as they discuss current affairs, such as the lives of refugees and the current disasters of the wider world.

The school has effective arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily. Staff reinforce this by encouraging pupils to keep fit and eat and drink healthily. The numerous opportunities that are provided, which include a wide range of external visitors who come to talk to pupils about the importance of keeping fit and attending physical exercise sessions and sports clubs, contribute well to their wellbeing and their awareness of living healthily.

The school has effective procedures to track and monitor pupils' progress and wellbeing. This helps staff to identify quickly any pupils who need support and provide useful programmes for them, which meet their needs. Assistants support these pupils meaningfully in order to enable them to make robust and consistent progress. The individual education plans of pupils with additional learning needs are concise and clear. Plans are reviewed regularly with pupils and their parents, and are adapted purposefully where necessary.

There is a highly supportive relationship between parents, the community and the school. Parents are informed regularly about the school's activities and events, and counselling and support sessions are organised for them by external agencies, where necessary. The school provides a number of effective workshops to raise parents' awareness of new procedures in education in the form of practical values sessions and school open days. Parents' involvement in their children's education is valuable and makes them more aware of how they can help their children at home.

Staff provide numerous opportunities for pupils to shoulder responsibilities and make sensible decisions for the benefit of their community through pupil's voice groups, such as the school council and eco committee. A very good example of this is the effect of the committee's visit to the local canal to conduct a litter survey. Following the visit, pupils sent a letter to the local council to share their concerns about the lack of litter bins there. As a result, the local council has responded positively to their letter and has placed more litter bins along the canal.

The school provides a purposeful variety of opportunities for pupils to perform at the school, in the local community and beyond. Good examples include performing in the Cwmbran Choral Festival and competing in the Urdd Eisteddfod. This contributes successfully towards increasing pupils' confidence and developing their social skills. Staff plan a beneficial range of purposeful activities that develop pupils' awareness and appreciation of Welsh culture. Educational visits to places of interest, such as the Big Pit in Blaenavon and the residential trip to the Urdd residential centre in Llangrannog, develop pupils' awareness of history, both locally and further afield, positively.

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

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher's vision is based firmly on developing the school as an effective educational community, which ensures that pupils' wellbeing is sound and that they attain and maintain good standards. All of the school's staff realise this vision successfully.

The headteacher is very confident in her leadership. She distributes responsibilities sensibly among staff, and has clear structures to support them. Members of the senior management team have definite roles. They lead learning teams purposefully and promote teamwork well. Staff work closely with the headteacher to ensure that the school community is well-organised and managed effectively. All management, team and staff meetings are structured purposefully and provide beneficial lines of communication between leaders, teachers and assistants.

The school has an established monitoring and self-evaluation programme, which focuses well on checking aspects of their work, including teaching, scrutinising books, planning, the pupil's voice and pupils' standards of attainment. As a result, leaders have an appropriate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders' commitment to ensuring improvement across the school contributes directly towards ensuring that standards of teaching and learning are sound. For example, teachers have adapted provision in order to establish the new

curriculum for Wales by changing their themes to engage nearly all pupils' interest, ignite their imagination and strengthen their voice in relation to their learning. However, self-evaluation procedures have not identified clearly enough key aspects of provision that hinder the development of the school in a few areas, such as pedagogy at the top of the foundation phase and consistency when correcting pupils' spoken Welsh.

The school is a successful learning community, in which the headteacher undertakes projects that are of benefit to pupils and have a positive effect on provision and standards. For example, she has recently increased the focus on improving wellbeing provision for pupils and staff, and has succeeded in employing a drama and music therapist to develop pupils' social skills and confidence. This has had a positive effect on their commitment and willingness to learn.

Leaders have created a robust culture to manage staff performance and support their professional learning needs. This process supports all members of staff and leads to a high level of professional learning. Teachers have attended courses that enable them to develop their expertise in specific areas, such as mental wellbeing and pupils' spelling skills. Assistants have also received language refresher training to improve their Welsh language skills. Staff also benefit from valuable opportunities to share good practice, both inside and outside the school. For example, they co-ordinate the work of the Welsh cluster of nearby schools. The deputy headteacher also shares the school's excellent practice in wellbeing by leading courses for teachers within the local authority and in national conferences. This ensures that provision and support for pupils are effective.

Governors are very supportive and know the school community very well. They receive detailed and purposeful information from the headteacher, which enables them to fulfil their work effectively. Members of the governing body visit the school regularly and conduct learning walks, talk to pupils and scrutinise their books. As a result, they have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement, and challenge leaders skilfully in order to ensure continuous improvement.

The headteacher and governing body manage the school's funding carefully and review expenditure in detail. They use the pupil development grant effectively to provide a wide variety of support activities for all relevant pupils, for example to improve their reading skills.

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.

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