



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

A report on

**Ysgol Y Ferch o'r Sger
Greenfield Terrace
North Cornelly
CF33 4LW**

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by

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

About Ysgol Y Ferch o'r Sger

Ysgol Y Ferch o'r Sger is situated in the village of North Cornelly in Bridgend local authority. There are 173 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including 19 part-time nursery age pupils. They are divided into seven classes, including two mixed-age classes.

Over a three-year-period, around 13% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. This is slightly lower than the national percentage of 18%. Few pupils are from Welsh-speaking homes. The school has identified around 10% of its pupils as having additional learning needs. This is lower than the national percentage of 21%.

The headteacher began in post in September 2009 and the school was last inspected in November 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

The school has a strong Welsh ethos and pupils show pride towards Welsh culture and their local community. On the whole, teaching is sound and teachers provide a wide range of interesting and practical learning experiences for pupils, which engage their enthusiasm towards learning. Many pupils develop to become independent learners. They work well with others and provide their peers with help and support, when necessary. The school's provision for vulnerable pupils is commendable and responds well to their needs. Across the school, pupils are very polite and caring towards each other.

Over the last two years, instability in staffing has limited leaders' ability to address inconsistencies in provision and standards. The headteacher and governors now provide a clear direction for the school's work, the current staffing structure is clear and leaders at all levels fulfil their duties conscientiously. They now use a purposeful range of suitable evaluation activities. As a result, they have increasingly sound knowledge of current standards, which enables them to plan and implement suitable improvements.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that the school's leadership is effective at every level
- R2 Address the aspects of site safety that were identified during the inspection
- R3 Address the deficit in the school's budget
- R4 Raise pupils' standards of writing
- R5 Ensure that formative and summative assessment procedures are effective

What happens next

The school will produce an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

During their time at the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make sound progress in their learning. They build effectively on previous learning and apply their thinking, creative and problem-solving skills regularly across a range of areas of learning.

Across the school, most pupils show positive attitudes towards the Welsh language and pride in their Welshness. Although many pupils in the nursery class speak very little Welsh on entry to the school, they acquire the language quickly. Across the foundation phase, most pupils listen and respond well to instructions from adults. In Year 1, many recount the story of the Very Hungry Caterpillar sensibly by using particular vocabulary from within the story. At the top of the phase, many talk confidently in a wider range of contexts, for example when giving instructions to an electronic toy to find a giraffe that is hiding in the jungle. In key stage 2, many pupils build on their oral skills effectively. By the time they reach the top of the school, most express themselves maturely in both languages, for example when discussing the characteristics of a horror story.

In the foundation phase, many pupils' reading skills are developing appropriately. They use a suitable range of strategies to read unfamiliar words. By the end of the phase, many read text with appropriate accuracy. In key stage 2, many pupils develop as confident learners in both languages. Most use their higher order reading skills successfully to gather information, for example about interesting centres in Wales and the Great Barrier Reef.

In the foundation phase, a majority of pupils make appropriate progress in their writing skills and develop their ideas sensibly, while using basic punctuation. By the end of the phase, a majority spell familiar words correctly and create suitable short pieces, for example when writing a newspaper article following their visit to the village of Cornelly. However, pupils do not write freely regularly enough across the areas of learning. They over-use writing frames, which limits their ability to write independently. Across key stage 2, many pupils make appropriate progress when writing in Welsh and English. A minority of pupils write to a high standard in language lessons, use robust syntax and include a range of purposeful vocabulary to create effect. They have done this effectively, for example when writing a monologue based on the legend of the Maid of Cefn Ydfa. However, pupils do not always apply their writing skills to the same standard across the curriculum, particularly in Welsh.

In the foundation phase, most pupils' numeracy skills are developing soundly. They recognise shapes and handle data effectively in various situations. Most pupils calculate confidently, for example when guessing and calculating how many cubes of sugar are in different breakfast cereals. By the end of the phase, many apply their skills independently, for example when using different coins when role-playing in the class shop.

Most pupils in key stage 2 have a sound understanding of number strategies, volume, measurement and fractions. They use their number skills confidently, for

example to calculate the area and perimeters of familiar and unfamiliar shapes. Most pupils apply their numeracy skills well when solving problems in mathematics lessons. However, pupils do not apply their numeracy skills frequently or to the same level across the curriculum.

In the foundation phase, most pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are sound. They use a range of multimedia computer programs effectively. By the end of the phase, most use electronic tablets confidently, for example when presenting the story of the 'Very Hungry Caterpillar'. Most pupils in key stage 2 use their ICT skills skilfully. They use equipment creatively to create multimedia presentations on the Second World War, and use a formula correctly to calculate the cost of food for an astronaut.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Most pupils enjoy school and feel safe there. They are polite towards each other, staff and visitors, and show pride in their school and their local community. Most pupils are very caring towards each other and treat others with respect in lessons, in the dining hall and on the playground. Most pupils' standards of behaviour are good.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of eating and drinking healthily, and taking part in regular exercise. This is reinforced successfully as many attend a wide range of physical activities that are organised within the curriculum, in addition to the extra-curricular clubs that are provided for them.

Many pupils shoulder responsibilities enthusiastically within a wide range of appropriate committees. A good example of this is the way in which members of the wellbeing committee have gathered information about their peers' favourite vegetable, and presented it to the cook in order to prepare healthy lunches for them. Committee members understand that they represent the views of other pupils within the school community, and give them feedback on their discussions and decisions following meetings. They participate enthusiastically in a variety of events; for example, digital leaders give effective guidance to staff, parents, governors and pupils in order to ensure that they stay safe online. As a result, nearly all pupils have good knowledge and understanding of e-safety.

Through the school's exciting curriculum, many pupils' knowledge of global citizenship is developing purposefully.

Most pupils have sound attitudes to learning. They show enthusiasm and motivation towards their work and apply themselves diligently to their tasks, and stay on task for specific periods. Most pupils discuss their work confidently and express their views about what they would like to learn.

Many pupils develop to become independent learners. They work well with others, and help and support their peers when necessary. This is one of the school's strengths. Most pupils work enthusiastically and show that they are not afraid of making mistakes in order to succeed. Pupils are willing to take a risk when learning and see mistakes as an integral part of the learning process.

Many pupils contribute regularly to activities in the community. They compete in sports activities, visit a number of places of interest and take part in concerts and services regularly. This develops pupils' understanding of the importance of being conscientious citizens within their local community and prepares them well for the future.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Most teachers provide a wide range of rich learning experiences for pupils, which engage their interest successfully and develop them as confident and creative individuals. Staff model good spoken language, which has a positive effect on pupils' oral skills. Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking skills in a wide range of contexts across the curriculum. As a result, many pupils take ownership of their learning. In many classes, where teaching is at its most effective, teachers' presentations are interesting, lively and challenge pupils successfully. In these classes, teachers question skilfully to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding well. They encourage them to think and reason their responses at a higher level, for example in number activities that are based on fractions, decimals and percentages. In a few classes, where teaching is less effective, teachers over-direct activities. This restricts a few pupils from developing as independent learners. In these classes, tasks are not always challenging enough to ensure that all pupils develop as ambitious learners, particularly in activities in which pupils guide their own learning.

Teachers provide pupils with appropriate oral and written feedback in order for them to know how well they are achieving. However, feedback does not always give pupils enough guidance to understand how to improve their work. There are very few opportunities for pupils to reflect on teachers' feedback and improve their efforts. As a result, a minority of pupils do not have a sound enough understanding of the next steps in their learning.

The school is in the process of adapting its schemes of work in response to the requirements of the new curriculum for Wales. Planning to develop pupils' creativity is robust. For example, they have recently studied and emulated the work of artists such as Rhiannon Roberts and Giuseppe Arcimboldo.

The principles of the foundation phase have been embedded fully, which has a positive effect on most pupils' independent skills. Teachers across the school make effective and flexible use of the school's resources, including the outdoor areas, in order to develop pupils' skills soundly.

Beneficial opportunities are ensured to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. The focus on oracy and reading has had a positive effect on pupils' oral skills. However, opportunities to strengthen pupils' free and extended writing skills in various subjects and areas, are limited, particularly at the top of the foundation phase. Provision for ICT is sound, and teachers have embedded the expectations of the digital competence framework consistently across the areas of learning and the curriculum.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

The school is a welcoming and inclusive community that provides robust care, support and guidance for its pupils. The school has appropriate arrangements for eating and drinking healthily, and staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to keep fit by organising a range of activities and sports clubs for them.

The school works very effectively with a number of specialist agencies. The relationship between the school, social services and the youth offending service supports vulnerable pupils and their families successfully. This has a positive effect on pupils' wellbeing and emotional development.

The school's provision for pupils with additional learning needs is effective and ensures that most of these pupils make good progress in their learning skills. Staff provide them with effective support, which helps them purposefully in literacy and numeracy activities. This ensures valuable opportunities for pupils to work with their peers at a level that is appropriate for their age and ability. This contributes effectively to their attitudes towards learning. Individual education plans are of good quality and include specific targets for them. Intervention programmes are purposeful and meet nearly all pupils' requirements. These ensure that they receive the relevant level of support. As a result, most pupils make sound progress from their starting points.

Provision to develop pupils' creative skills is robustly good. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to perform and take part in concerts, services and compete in eisteddfodau. This contributes successfully towards raising their self-confidence and awareness of Welsh heritage within their local community.

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to lead specific aspects of the school's work. A good example of this is the enthusiastic work of the Welshness committee in promoting the use of the Welsh language in the school's daily life. As a result, most pupils use the Welsh language naturally in lessons and while playing.

There is a prominent and effective emphasis in the school's life on developing pupils' values. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural attitudes are promoted successfully through the curriculum, collective worship assemblies and the creative arts.

The school tracks pupils' progress effectively. Arrangements measure pupils' attainment against specific targets appropriately. On the whole, teachers and other leaders use the information that derives from these arrangements suitably to identify pupils who need additional support with literacy and numeracy. However, assessments are not always reliable enough. As a result, leaders have not always identified a few pupils' needs early enough.

The school works productively with parents to enable them to support their children's learning. For example, the school provides valuable opportunities for parents to attend workshops, such as learning through play and numeracy, in addition to specific sessions on how to help children with their homework. This enables parents to support their children's education.

During the inspection, a few issues were raised regarding the safety of the site. Although the school has responded to a number of issues that were raised, its arrangements for safeguarding continue to raise some concern.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher's vision is based firmly on ensuring the wellbeing and high standards of all pupils. Although the school has been through a period of instability in terms of staffing, teachers and assistants work closely and effectively to create a creative and Welsh ethos for pupils. The current staffing structure is clear and leaders at all levels fulfil their duties conscientiously. They are beginning to develop their leadership skills effectively by taking responsibility for leading improvements in the areas for which they are responsible. However, they do not always play a critical enough part in quality monitoring procedures or evaluate the effect of provision on pupils' progress and standards.

Members of the governing body are very supportive and know the school community well. Many of the members are relatively new to their roles. They receive comprehensive reports from the headteacher about the school's work. As a result, they have sound knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. However, over time, the governing body has not worked effectively enough with leaders to set a clear strategic direction for the school in order to ensure continuous improvements.

The school's self-evaluation procedures are comprehensive, based on a wide range of first-hand evidence, and provide an accurate picture of the important areas for improvement. There is a close link between the findings of the self-evaluation process and the priorities in the school development plan. The plan includes a suitable number of priorities to be achieved within a realistic timescale. However, the success criteria and monitoring arrangements are not always clear enough. This limits leaders' ability to measure the effect of the plan on the quality of provision and pupils' standards.

Performance management arrangements are efficient. Visits to other schools and opportunities for teachers to observe each other's lessons contribute well to the robust quality of teaching within the school. The school takes advantage of opportunities to work with schools outside its local area in order to enrich pupils' learning experiences. A successful example of this is the way in which schools have shared teachers' expertise in dance, drama and art. As a result, pupils develop good creative skills. The school works closely with schools in the cluster to standardise and moderate pupils' work. However, the school's internal arrangements are not always robust enough to ensure the validity and accuracy of their assessments.

The school has enough qualified teachers and support staff to deliver the curriculum and provide appropriate support for pupils. All learning areas are used very effectively, including those indoors and outdoors. The school uses the pupil development grant purposefully to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of pupils who are eligible to receive free school meals. As a result, most of these pupils make good progress from their starting points. Over time, the school has not used its financial resources efficiently or effectively enough. The school is now working with the local authority to reduce the significant deficit in its budget.

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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