



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

A report on

**Ysgol Aberporth
Rhiw y Plas
Aberporth
Cardigan
SA43 2DA**

Date of inspection: March 2020

by

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

About Ysgol Aberporth

Ysgol Gynradd Gymunedol Aberporth is situated in the seaside village of Aberporth, which is a few miles north of the town of Cardigan in Ceredigion local authority. There are 152 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including 5 full-time nursery pupils and 17 pupils who attend Canolfan y Don, which is a unit for pupils with profound special educational needs. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work, and English is introduced to pupils from Year 3 onwards.

Over a three-year period, slightly below 17% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. This is slightly lower than the national percentage of 18%. Around 12% of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes, and very few are from ethnic minority backgrounds or speak English as an additional language. The school has identified around 32% of its pupils as having special educational needs. Very few have a statement of special educational needs. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is higher than the national average of 21%.

The school was last inspected by Estyn in May 2013, and the current headteacher was appointed to the post in September 2019.

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

A caring and hard-working ethos permeates all of this school's activities. The caring, enthusiastic and inclusive learning community ensures that pupils feel happy and safe attending school. The headteacher, teachers and assistants encourage all pupils, including those at Canolfan y Don, to apply themselves to their tasks and succeed in their learning. As a result, most pupils make good progress in their skills, and nearly all in the mainstream develop very polished Welsh oral skills, whatever their linguistic background.

Nearly all pupils behave very well. They are polite and respectful towards each other and adults, and interact highly effectively. The completely natural way in which pupils at Canolfan y Don integrate with the mainstream pupils reinforces the strong principle of inclusivity that exists within the school. Nearly all are happy and proud to belong to its community and family.

The headteacher and staff have a clear vision that is based on supporting pupils' wellbeing, and ensuring that they are ambitious individuals who are proud of their community and their Welshness.

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 Raise pupils' standards of reading in key stage 2

R2 Ensure that key stage 2 teachers provide enough regular opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy and extended writing skills across the curriculum

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

Most pupils in the youngest class in the foundation phase have literacy and numeracy skills that are lower than expected considering their age. However, most make good progress from their starting points while they are at the school. A few speak Welsh on entry to the school, but nearly all learn the language very quickly. This is one of the school's main strengths. Nearly all pupils who are eligible for free school meals, and those with special educational needs in both the mainstream and Canolfan y Don, make progress that is at least good.

Most pupils in the foundation phase make very good progress in their speaking and listening skills. They join in enthusiastically to perform nursery rhymes and songs with their peers. They listen attentively to adults and each other, and speak Welsh fluently and very naturally by using wide vocabulary and correct syntax when discussing their experiences.

In key stage 2, many hold extended conversations and speak with a high level of accuracy. They are willing to contribute to class discussions confidently and intelligently. By Year 6, most pupils' English oral skills develop well, and many translanguage very confidently and naturally. Nearly all pupils at Canolfan y Don make good progress in communicating in ways that are suitable for them.

Most pupils' reading skills are developing well. Very quickly, pupils in the nursery and reception class recognise letters when using the active alphabet and, by Year 2, most read fluently by using suitable strategies to build unfamiliar words.

In key stage 2, many pupils have appropriate reading skills in both languages. They use their skills suitably to gather relevant information from books and various texts, in addition to completing comprehension tasks confidently. However, a minority do not read a wide enough range of books regularly or with good expression. This hinders their progress and their enjoyment in reading.

Many pupils across the school make appropriate progress in developing their writing skills. By the end of the foundation phase, most write for a range of purposes. For example, they write an interesting newspaper article on the story 'Sbwriel Sbangó'. On the whole, the quality of many pupils' spelling and punctuation is good, and most use their writing skills at the appropriate level in their work across the curriculum. For example, Year 2 pupils create a factual leaflet about a planet of their choice when studying a theme based on space.

In key stage 2, many pupils build appropriately on their writing skills in both languages. They have an appropriate awareness of the features of different genres, and write for a purpose in a variety of styles. For example, they write a letter to their local Member of Parliament to complain about the traffic situation outside the school. However, there are few examples of writing at length in various media.

In the foundation phase, pupils' mathematical skills are developing well. In the nursery and reception class, most recognise numbers to at least 20, and count fairly

confidently forwards and backwards. They develop their skills further in Years 1 and 2, and apply their understanding of mathematics confidently in different contexts. For example, Year 1 pupils analyse data on their peers' favourite birds confidently and display their findings correctly in the form of a graph.

Most pupils in key stage 2 make appropriate progress in their mathematical skills, but a few lack confidence in their mental arithmetic skills. However, leaders have identified this shortcoming and have developed a work programme to address it. This is beginning to have a positive effect on standards. Many pupils in key stage 2 apply their numeracy skills fairly confidently in others areas across the curriculum, when they are given an opportunity to do so. For example, in scientific experiments, Year 5 and 6 pupils measure the surface area of different parachutes, time each one falling to the ground after being dropped from a specific height, display the results in the form of a graph, and come to a conclusion fairly correctly.

Most pupils in the foundation phase develop a valuable range of information and communication technology (ICT) skills successfully. Many record themselves speaking on a microphone and listen back to their voices, which enriches opportunities for them to apply their oral skills from an early age. By the end of Year 2, many control art programs effectively to create pictures to accompany their learning experiences, for example when drawing farms animals following an educational trip to a local farm. Nearly all have taken advantage of the experience of conducting a video conference to communicate with a family in another country to discuss a religious celebration.

In key stage 2, pupils build appropriately on their previous ICT skills in order to enrich their work. Many work in pairs to create simple music, and write a rap successfully before recording it. Many develop their early programming skills well by designing a computer game, and nearly all begin to use a database successfully to store and organise information, for example when learning about the planets in the universe.

Most pupils across the school use and develop their thinking skills very well. They use their skills regularly to solve problems, and complete practical tasks and investigative challenges independently and successfully.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils feel happy at school and are proud to be a part of its community. They feel safe and know whom to approach when they have any worries or concerns, as they are confident that that person will help them. Most have a sound understanding of fairness and tolerance of others, and they are very aware of their rights as children. From an early age, nearly all understand which food and drink are good for them, along with the importance of regular exercise to stay healthy. The 'Digital Wizards' take their roles seriously to ensure that their peers understand the main principles of e-safety rigorously. As a result, nearly all have a sound awareness of how to stay safe online.

One of the school's main qualities is the good behaviour of nearly all pupils. They treat each other and adults with courtesy and respect, and interact highly effectively with each other in the classrooms and outdoor areas. The wholly natural way in which pupils at Canolfan y Don integrate with the mainstream pupils is wonderful, and affirms the strong principle of inclusivity that exists within the school.

Individuals undertake their leadership roles maturely. 'Cryw y Porth' is an active group, which is a sensible combination of the school council and eco council. They manage their meetings fairly independently, and make decisions on issues that are important to them and have an influence on themselves and their peers. They have measured the temperature in different parts of the school and, having analysed the data and realised that the temperature is too cold in some parts, have contacted local authority officers to complain. The situation has now improved.

Most pupils develop as confident and independent learners from a very young age. They choose their activities sensibly and respond positively to advice and guidance from adults. Nearly all pupils at Canolfan y Don respond well to praise and oral feedback, and show a natural enthusiasm towards their learning.

Nearly all pupils apply themselves conscientiously to their tasks, and are very willing to try new activities. They show a keen interest in their work, concentrate well and persevere to finish tasks within a specific timescale. When faced with difficulties with their tasks, they are very willing to implement the 'tri cyn fi' ('three before me') strategy before asking their teachers for help. Their resilience is very evident as they undertake the afternoon challenges in key stage 2, where they choose activities to attempt. Nearly all pupils appreciate the regular opportunities they are given to contribute to what they learn within the whole-school termly themes. This gives them good ownership of their learning.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Teachers in all classes engage pupils' interest well and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding to a suitable level as they move through the school. On the whole, they have high expectations of all pupils, particularly in terms of their Welsh oral skills, which have obviously been a priority for many years. Classes are highly stimulating and engaging spaces in which pupils can learn productively. Displays are colourful and celebrate pupils' work.

Teachers' planning procedures in the mainstream and at Canolfan y Don are rigorous, and ensure that the activities that are provided for pupils are suitable, interesting and build appropriately on their previous learning. Teachers use a wide variety of teaching methods to challenge pupils and hold their interest, including those who attend Canolfan y Don. As a result, most make good progress in their learning.

Teachers share instructions and explanations clearly with pupils. They use various questioning techniques skilfully to extend and develop their responses further, and gain an accurate picture of their understanding. As a result, pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding well.

Teachers and learning assistants manage pupils' behaviour effectively and treat all of them equally. The positive working relationship between all adults and pupils is one of the school's notable qualities.

Teachers' oral and written feedback helps pupils to know how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve. They praise good effort and encourage pupils to improve their work regularly. As a result, most pupils know what

they need to do in order to succeed and improve their work. Teachers provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to assess their own performance. This practice is developing very well and encourages pupils to focus well on the success criteria. However, the school's practice of encouraging pupils to evaluate the performance of their peers has not developed as well.

Teachers plan fun lessons for pupils, which stimulate and enrich their experiences well. Plans are detailed and based on whole-school themes, in order to ensure an appropriate range and a good balance across a range of subjects and areas of the curriculum. This way of planning ensures consistency as pupils transfer from Canolfan y Don to the mainstream. There are good opportunities for pupils to provide ideas for these plans, and they are structured appropriately to coincide with the main principles of the new curriculum. As a result, pupils have good ownership of their learning, which engages their enthusiasm and understanding in all aspects of the school's work.

The curriculum meets most pupils' needs well and is adapted skilfully to respond to the needs of individuals and specific groups. Intervention programmes, which are led by experienced staff, have a positive effect on nearly all pupils' standards of literacy and numeracy.

Teachers often use the local area successfully as an interesting prompt for a number of activities. For example, the theme 'Y Dydd Iau Mawr' ('The Big Thursday') that is linked to the Aberporth annual Summer Fair, broadens pupils' understanding of local traditional celebrations. They also plan regular opportunities to enrich pupils' knowledge of Wales. Since the beginning of this academic year, they have established specific areas to celebrate Welshness and Welsh culture. In order to enrich their creative activities, they provide opportunities for pupils to experiment with colours, for example to emulate the work of a local artist based on Welsh women.

The principles of the foundation phase have been embedded firmly in the school, and there is a very effective balance between activities that are facilitated successfully by staff and independent challenges for pupils. Across the school, stimulating and interesting areas are used very successfully, which encourages pupils' enthusiasm and independence. For example, the 'Octopod' in the foundation phase enriches creative activities, and the 'Cwtsh nos' provides an opportunity for pupils to use their senses naturally. The varied and exciting outdoor areas are used to enrich the experiences of pupils in the foundation phase and Canolfan y Don consistently and very effectively. Staff have recently developed the principles of the foundation phase successfully throughout key stage 2 by introducing various challenges for pupils to solve independently.

Staff have revised their schemes of work recently in order to ensure that pupils develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills methodically and systematically. Although these schemes are rigorous and ensure that they include rich and creative learning experiences for pupils, it is too early to see their long-term effect on standards. There is currently a lack of opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy and extended writing skills sufficiently across the curriculum.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a caring, enthusiastic and inclusive community, which ensures that pupils feel happy and safe. Staff encourage all pupils, including those at Canolfan y Don, to apply themselves to their activities and succeed in their learning. Specific attention is given to nurturing positive attitudes among all pupils towards their learning and towards a healthy lifestyle. The school has appropriate procedures to encourage pupils to eat and drink healthily, and its arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Pupils are given extensive opportunities to make decisions about the school's life and work. Members of 'Criw'r Porth', the Bronze Ambassadors and Super Ambassadors, the 'Digital Wizards' and the 'Cymry Cŵl' play a very important role within the school. They influence their peers to improve their attitudes towards a range of current affairs. These include reducing the use of plastic, encouraging their peers to live healthily and making the best use of the Welsh language in their everyday lives. The school raises pupils' awareness of their rights very effectively. This aspect is evident in all of its activities and has a very positive effect on pupils' confidence and perseverance.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, personal and social attitudes are developed successfully through specific lessons and collective worship sessions, where they are given specific opportunities to reflect and think about others. Provision for the personal development of pupils who attend Canolfan y Don has a positive effect on their courtesy and the way in which they work with others. Through a wide range of curricular experiences, the school develops pupils' cultural skills successfully, particularly their understanding of Welsh culture.

Equality and diversity are promoted highly effectively. As a result, nearly all pupils appreciate others for who they are, and do not discriminate on any grounds. The school places a strong emphasis on integrating pupils from Canolfan y Don and those in the mainstream, wherever it is appropriate to do so. As a result, all pupils feel that they are a core part of the 'Ysgol Aberporth family'.

The school has effective procedures to track the progress and wellbeing of individuals and groups of pupils. Leaders and other members of staff use the findings of these procedures regularly and successfully to ensure that pupils make appropriate progress, and to identify any patterns or shortcomings in provision. Having identified any shortcomings, staff plan specific activities or interventions to address them. As a result, provision for pupils with special educational needs, including those who attend Canolfan y Don, is effective and contributes well, over time, towards improving their outcomes and attainment.

The school has successful procedures to support pupils with emotional and social needs. This ensures that they are given opportunities to talk about their feelings if they wish to do so, which helps them to be ready to learn.

The school's partnership with parents is robust. Staff communicate with them regularly in various ways, and ensure that they are aware of relevant events. Sessions are organised occasionally to raise parents' awareness of how they can help their children at home. For example, Welsh lessons were organised, as well as

sessions to help them to encourage their children's positive behaviour. Parents appreciate this greatly. Parents, in turn, organise activities regularly to raise significant amounts of money to support the school.

Staff from the school, and its feeder nurseries, work together successfully to organise various activities in order for new children to familiarise themselves with the school. As a result, pupils settle quickly when they start at school for the first time, which has a positive effect on their willingness to learn.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher, who was appointed in September 2019, has set a clear and robust strategic direction for the school. He has shared his vision successfully with staff, governors, pupils and parents. This vision focuses directly on supporting children's wellbeing and ensuring that they have the basic skills to be ambitious individuals who are proud of their community and their Welshness. He has high expectations of himself, staff and pupils. As a result, a caring and hard-working ethos permeates all of the school's work.

The headteacher is supported effectively by the assistant headteacher, other senior leaders and all staff. There is a strong sense of teamwork within the school. All staff are very willing to embrace new ideas and different ways of teaching, which includes specific and independent challenges for pupils in key stage 2. As a result, pupils use the skills that they have learned previously to solve problems and complete independent activities in other contexts.

The school has rigorous and robust procedures that consider first-hand evidence and staff's views appropriately to evaluate its performance in detail. However, they do not give enough consideration to the views of pupils and parents in the process. Reports that derive from these procedures are evaluative and have given the new headteacher a clear picture of the school's strengths and what needs to be improved. Having distilled the main messages from the wide range of evaluation sources, the headteacher has formed a consistent method of measuring progress in specific areas. This is the basis of the development plan and enables him to draw the attention of staff and governors to the specific areas for improvement, in addition to evaluating progress against them over time.

Improvement objectives that are identified in the development plan derive directly from the self-evaluation procedure. They place a clear focus on raising pupils' standards of literacy and numeracy, in addition to developing a curriculum that will promote their independence. The school has started to place an emphasis on independent learning, which is the basis of the new curriculum for Wales. This is already having a positive effect on pupils' independent learning skills as they respond to different challenges.

Members of the governing body are very supportive of the school's work and know the school well. They visit the school regularly and have a sound understanding of its practices and the challenges that staff and pupils face from day to day. They have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They use the information that derives from a variety of first-hand activities, such as learning walks, teaching observations, talking to learners and scrutinising books to challenge the school appropriately.

The school has robust procedures to manage the performance of teachers and assistants, which are based on the individual professional learning needs and the school's priorities for improvement. Leaders support staff's professional learning needs very well. As a result, most have visited other schools to observe good practice and have welcomed teachers from other schools, for example to see how they have developed new methods of teaching phonics. Effective training for staff at Canolfan y Don succeeds in strengthening and expanding their knowledge of how to deal with pupils' special educational needs in the mainstream, as well as in the unit.

Leaders manage the school's resources effectively and make decisions on expenditure that link directly to the priorities for improvement. On the whole, leaders provide good quality resources that meet pupils' needs sensibly. They manage the foundation phase's outdoor areas effectively to improve pupils' learning experiences. The school uses the pupil development grant sensibly to provide additional support to help vulnerable pupils to learn, and ensure that they are given every opportunity to take advantage of all experiences that are provided by the school. This has a very positive effect on their achievement and progress.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and the specialist resource base (where appropriate), and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups (where appropriate) and in outdoor areas
- visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning (where appropriate)
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' wellbeing, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

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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