



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

A report on

**Ysgol Griffith Jones
Station Road
St. Clears
SA33 4BT**

Date of inspection: March 2020

by

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

About Ysgol Griffith Jones

Ysgol Griffith Jones is situated in the village of St Clears near Carmarthen, in Carmarthenshire local authority. It provides education for its pupils through the medium of Welsh or English in two streams. There are 333 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including 39 part-time and full-time pupils in the nursery class. The school has 10 single-age classes and three mixed-age classes. The majority of pupils attend the Welsh stream, and 32% of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes.

Over a three-year period, around 10% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. This is significantly lower than the national percentage of 18%. The school has identified around 19% of its pupils as having special educational needs. This is slightly lower than the national percentage of 21%.

The current headteacher was appointed to the post in September 2008 and the school was last inspected by Estyn in July 2013.

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 happy and caring environment. Nearly all pupils are affectionate and treat each other, staff and visitors with obvious respect. They come to school full of enthusiasm to learn. Most pupils speak enthusiastically about all of the experiences that they are given and take pride in their work and the school's successes. Nearly all pupils are very well behaved.

The school's provision to develop pupils' Welsh and knowledge of their heritage is effective. As a result, most pupils know what it means to be Welsh, and speak Welsh completely naturally and with pride. They have a sound understanding of Welsh culture.

The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership. As a result, leaders work together effectively to maintain the good standards that are seen across the school, and stimulate improvements. There is a strong culture of team work among all staff, particularly in terms of ensuring that most pupils make the expected progress and supporting pupils' wellbeing.

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 Ensure that the principles of the foundation phase are implemented in full in Year 2
- R2 Ensure regular opportunities for pupils to make choices about their learning in order to develop as independent learners
- R3 Raise the standards of more able pupils
- R4 Improve pupils' attendance

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

During their time at the school, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress as they move through the school.

Nearly all pupils in both streams listen attentively to adults and each other. Most pupils develop their oral skills effectively in a good range of activities. In the foundation phase, they discuss their work confidently and respect each other's contributions. Many are keen to develop their ideas successfully from nursery age. A good example of this is the way in which they choose a sound to represent the characters in the story of 'Alun yr Arth'. As pupils move through the school, many have the skills to discuss various topics maturely as they argue for and against having a famous fast food restaurant in the village. They develop to become skilful bilingual learners.

At the beginning of the foundation phase, many pupils develop a useful understanding of letters and sounds. By the end of the phase, nearly all pupils have positive attitudes towards reading. In key stage 2, most pupils read fluently and with accuracy in Welsh and English. They discuss the content of books purposefully and show a preference for different types of books. A very few pupils in the English stream read Welsh novels very skilfully and discuss them confidently in Welsh. However, many pupils' Welsh reading skills in the English stream are less developed. They explain the text simply and pronounce words correctly when reading aloud.

Most pupils in both streams make effective progress in their writing skills in language lessons and, on the whole, in other subjects. In the nursery, many pupils develop their early mark-making skills effectively. For example, they are beginning to hold coloured pencils correctly and colour the shapes of letters carefully. By Year 2, many pupils write accurately in a limited range of styles, for example when writing a detailed description of the village of St Clears.

Across key stage 2, most pupils structure their work correctly in Welsh and English. By Year 6, many write confidently in a range of contexts and produce purposeful work. For example, they write a review of their favourite film and create mature, factual pieces by using a range of different sources to describe the life of an evacuee. Pupils' skills in Welsh as a second language in the English stream are developing appropriately as they describe themselves, write a diary about half-term and express an opinion about pollution in coal mines. Although many pupils use their literacy skills successfully across the curriculum, very few more able pupils produce written work that corresponds to their ability. Most pupils' handwriting and presentation of work are neat.

Most pupils in the foundation phase follow instructions well to broaden their mathematical knowledge effectively during lessons. A good example of this is the way in which pupils in the reception class use non-standard units to measure shapes confidently and record the number correctly. Most pupils in Year 2 develop appropriate skills. They collect and present data about their families' jobs, and write simple instructions to discover how to get to the different shops in the village.

Most pupils' number skills in key stage 2 develop well on their previous learning. They gather information correctly and present it in a database on mythical beasts, for example. Most pupils in Year 6 use different graphs to convey scientific information effectively. Many pupils are able to use co-ordinates skilfully and solve the profit that fair trade farmers make for their produce successfully. On the whole, most pupils in key stage 2 use their numeracy skills purposefully in other subjects across the curriculum.

Most pupils' progress in their information and communication technology (ICT) skills is suitable in the foundation phase. For example, they give instructions to an animal of their choice to move around the garden, and use a number of digital programs to develop their literacy and numeracy skills purposefully. Most pupils in key stage 2 use their ICT skills skilfully in different subjects. They choose sensible methods to present their work effectively, such as using a green screen to convey how to stay safe online. Many Year 6 pupils create educational presentations about France, and add short films confidently. Most pupils speak knowledgeably about the need to keep personal information safe from people that they do not know.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Most pupils are proud of their school and feel safe in their inclusive environment. They are happy to discuss any concerns with staff, and by sharing their feelings through a daily digital questionnaire, they are confident that adults listen to them and respond appropriately to their concerns. Many pupils are grateful for the extensive opportunities that their teachers provide for them.

Nearly all pupils are polite and respectful towards each other, staff and visitors. For example, many pupils hold doors open for visitors and greet them politely as they walk around the school. Most pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and speak confidently with adults in various situations. Nearly all pupils' behaviour is excellent.

Most pupils have positive working relationships with pupils. They work hard and have positive attitudes to learning. Many pupils work well together and show perseverance and resilience when completing tasks in pairs or groups. They settle quickly in lessons, and most maintain their concentration well. Many pupils understand the '3 before me' strategy to help them to solve any challenges that they face in their learning. Most older pupils are beginning to improve their own work successfully and have a strong understanding of their targets for improvement. Although they are beginning to contribute towards what they would like to learn, their contribution towards how they would like to learn is limited and only a minority of pupils develop their skills to work independently.

Most pupils have a strong understanding of the effect that eating healthily, drinking water and keeping fit has on their bodies. For example, the bronze ambassadors' activities to hold exercise sessions for foundation phase pupils develop their physical skills well. Many pupils in key stage 2, in addition to their physical education lessons, take advantage of the opportunity to be part of the school's successful teams, such as football, rugby and swimming. This contributes successfully to their understanding of how to improve their fitness and physical health.

Many pupils undertake roles and responsibilities enthusiastically, and develop their leadership skills successfully. Year 6 pupils, including those with special educational needs, are given an opportunity to take part in 'pupil's voice' groups. The diligent work of the eco committee ensures that most pupils have a strong awareness of sustainability. For example, the new initiative of running a school uniform exchange is a sweeping success and strengthens many pupils' understanding of recycling successfully. The school council plays an active part in raising money for various charities, such as Children in Need.

Many pupils develop as moral and conscientious citizens. They organise and take part in a number of varied activities, such as singing in a nearby residential home and competing in the local agricultural show. They take advantage of the opportunity to care for their habitat through the diligent work of the gardening club and by planting trees successfully on the school grounds. These experiences strengthen pupils' understanding of social issues and the needs of others successfully.

Most pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly and arrive at school punctually in the mornings. However, over time, pupils' attendance rates have not compared favourably with those of similar schools.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

All of the school's staff have an effective 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.

The school promotes the Welsh language and Welshness effectively. Staff model good spoken language, which has an effective influence on pupils' oral skills. As a result, nearly all pupils in the Welsh stream develop as competent and confident bilingual learners. Provision to develop pupils' Welsh skills in the English stream develops gradually as pupils move from one stage to the next. Staff plan effectively to develop a curriculum that is based on Welsh history, culture and heritage. This is one of the school's strengths and contributes successfully towards pupils' understanding of their local area, history and culture, for example when studying the history of 'Merched Beca' (Rebecca's Daughters).

Teachers work together effectively to ensure that all pupils are given a range of broad and interesting learning experiences. Cross-curricular themes expand most pupils' knowledge and understanding fairly consistently across the school. A good example of this is the older pupils' recent work on the 'Twrch Trwyth'. The curriculum is enriched effectively by conducting educational visits for pupils to places of interest and by using the expertise of visitors. For example, Year 6 pupils have visited Llanddowror church to learn about the work of Griffith Jones and his influence on the local area. The school has started to prepare appropriately to address aspects of the new curriculum for Wales.

There are valuable opportunities for pupils to use their literacy skills across the curriculum. For example, in Year 1, pupils write a recipe for Welsh cakes independently as part of the St David's Day celebrations. Year 4 pupils combine an outdoor experience by following the flow of the River Taff from the top of Preseli Mountain to the sea, and record the features of the landscape successfully.

Opportunities to develop numeracy skills are good in key stage 2. Teachers revisit mathematical concepts in different contexts; for example, Year 5 and 6 pupils design a home for woodlice by calculating the area of composite shapes correctly. However, there are few opportunities to develop number skills in various subjects in the foundation phase. There are thorough plans in place to implement the digital competence framework, which has a positive effect on the progress of many pupils' ICT skills.

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 examples, teachers set challenging tasks that enable pupils to use their previous knowledge and thinking skills effectively. For example, pupils try to solve grid references and compass points to locate important places in St Clears. Most teachers share clear lesson objectives, and success criteria are used regularly in order for pupils to develop confidence in evaluating their own progress. They use various questioning techniques effectively in order to expand pupils' understanding. Teachers provide pupils with comprehensive oral feedback and, on the whole, the school's specific strategy in terms of providing written feedback helps pupils to improve their work purposefully.

Provision to develop the principles of the foundation phase is effective up to Year 1. In these classes, nearly all activities that are provided develop pupils' independence and promote the use of the outdoor area to develop creative and physical skills successfully. However, the principles have not been embedded fully for older pupils in the foundation phase.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has a happy, caring and inclusive ethos where everyone is respected and appreciated. It is a friendly and familial community that promotes pupils' good behaviour, courtesy and commitment successfully.

The school has thorough procedures for tracking pupils' progress and wellbeing, and staff update them regularly to ensure that the information is accurate and up-to-date. Teachers use this information effectively to identify pupils who need additional support, and adapt provision as necessary. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is purposeful. Through a number of literacy, numeracy and wellbeing activities, staff ensure that all pupils receive the support necessary to succeed in their learning. Pupils' individual education plans include clear targets that are implemented successfully by teachers and assistants, in order to ensure that most pupils make sound progress against their targets. The school works effectively with external agencies in order to provide beneficial support for pupils with special educational needs, such as the speech therapist.

Arrangements for responding to pupils' emotional and social needs are sound and have a good effect on them. Individual pupils and specific groups receive purposeful support to ensure that they gain confidence and apply themselves to the school's activities. A good example of this is the successful 'chwarae teg' ('fair play') intervention, which ensures that vulnerable pupils develop their confidence to be able to join in with their peers during playtime and lunchtime.

There is a supportive relationship between parents and the school. Parents are informed regularly about the school's activities and events through letters and social media. Staff know the pupils and their families exceptionally well and have very positive relationships with nearly all of them. In addition to various training on e-safety and numeracy skills, parents appreciate the weekly 'drop-in' sessions to discuss any concerns they may have.

Provision to develop pupils' creative skills is effective. Local artists and a Welsh country singer are used to expand pupils' creative experiences successfully. Numerous and beneficial opportunities for pupils to perform and take part in concerts and compete in eisteddfodau are a strong feature of the school, and this makes a prominent contribution towards increasing pupils' self-confidence. Educational visits to places of interest, such as Castell Henllys and the residential weekend to Pendine outdoor education centre, develop pupils' awareness of the history and landscape of the local area and beyond effectively.

The school has very effective arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily. The curriculum, physical education lessons and numerous extra-curricular activities ensure that most pupils understand the advantages of regular exercise exceptionally well. The school has strong links with the community and takes advantage of different individuals' expertise in health and fitness. For example, a national cricketer, who is a former pupil, holds training sessions at the school each year.

Assemblies and plans for collective worship promote pupils' spiritual and moral development appropriately. The school promotes a close and productive relationship with the local church, as pupils take part in Harvest and Remembrance Day services. The school promotes equality, diversity and tolerance effectively. There is a prominent emphasis on promoting shared values, and this has a strong influence on pupils' behaviour. Children's rights are given due attention in the school's day-to-day life, and the right of the month makes a beneficial contribution to the sense of respect that exists between pupils and adults. As part of the fair trade committee's enthusiastic work and an e-twinning scheme with other schools around Europe, pupils also value their place as global citizens.

The school has suitable arrangements to improve attendance, which include working closely with parents and the local authority. However, arrangements have not yet had enough of an effect to raise the school's attendance levels.

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

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher provides robust leadership and management. This is based on a vision that focuses on pupils' wellbeing, developing the Welsh language and improving standards. All of the school's staff realise this vision successfully. The senior management team provides a clear and supportive direction for staff in order to maintain and raise standards.

The school has a positive culture of effective teamwork. Members of staff have clear responsibilities and undertake their roles effectively. The enthusiastic teachers show

a strong commitment to promoting continuous and sustainable improvements by coming together to discuss regularly and plan themes jointly. All members of staff share positive and professional working relationships, which support the school's caring ethos successfully.

The headteacher has effective performance management procedures for teachers and assistants, which are based on the priorities in the school development plan. He promotes staff's professional development successfully, which has a positive effect on the school's work. A good example of this is the effect of staff training to meet the needs of the digital competence framework on the obvious progress in pupils' ICT skills. The special educational needs co-ordinator has also adapted provision very effectively and has shared good practice with schools within the local authority.

The school has beneficial self-evaluation activities in order to identify its strengths and areas for improvement. Feedback from these activities contributes directly to improving pupils' standards. On the whole, the school improvement plan includes a number of sensible priorities. Leaders identify purposeful activities in order to meet the priorities, and earmark resources and staff effectively in order to fulfil them. Over time, the school responds purposefully to local and national priorities, such as developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and raising their standards of Welsh oracy. However, at times, priorities in the improvement plan do not have a timely enough influence, for example in order to meet the requirements of the foundation phase in full, and to improve pupils' attendance.

The governors are very supportive of the school and have a sound understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They have good knowledge of the school's main strengths and areas for improvement. They contribute constructively to the improvement process, and deepen their knowledge of standards and provision successfully. They do this by undertaking learning walks, and through meetings with the senior management team and their fellow governors, for example on curricular sub-committees. As a result, governors have a wider range of first-hand knowledge about the school in order to develop their role as critical friends.

The school is staffed purposefully and individual expertise is used well to enrich pupils' learning experiences. For example, it uses experts to provide opportunities for pupils to develop their sports and performing skills. The outdoor learning areas are very attractive and promote learning successfully. The school has extensive outdoor areas that have been developed creatively. These areas are used regularly, for example to increase pupils' fitness levels.

The headteacher, the administrative officer and the governors manage the school's budget carefully. Decisions on expenditure link closely to the school's strategic priorities. The pupil development grant is used well to improve provision to develop the literacy, numeracy and emotional skills of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. As a result, these pupils make sound progress from their starting points.

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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Publication date: 14/05/2020