



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

A report on

**Ysgol Gynradd Gwaelod y Garth
Main Road
Gwaelod y Garth
Cardiff
CF15 9HJ**

Date of inspection: December 2019

by

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

About Ysgol Gynradd Gwaelod y Garth

The school is situated in the village of Gwaelod y Garth in Cardiff local authority. It provides education through the medium of Welsh and English in two streams. There are 293 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including 45 part-time nursery age pupils. There are eight single-age classes in the Welsh stream and two mixed-age classes in the English stream. A majority of pupils attend the Welsh department, and 40% of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes.

Over a three-year-period, around 3% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. This is significantly lower than the national percentage of 18%. The school has identified around 10% of its pupils as having special educational needs. This is much lower than the national percentage of 21%.

The school was last inspected in December 2013 and the headteacher was appointed in November 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

Ysgol Gynradd Gwaelod y Garth is a welcoming school, and staff are caring towards pupils. Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school, feel safe there and treat each other, staff and visitors with respect. Nearly all pupils behave maturely. Most pupils develop as confidently learners, make sound progress and achieve well.

Staff create a supportive and stimulating learning environment for pupils, which encourages them to learn. Pupils take pride in the Welsh language and their close links with the local community. The school provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to contribute towards what they would like to learn, and to apply and develop their literacy and numeracy skills successfully across the curriculum.

The headteacher's vision is based on high expectations and the need for pupils' wellbeing to be at the heart of all of the school's work. In a very short time since being appointed, she has shared her vision effectively with pupils, governors and parents.

| 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 all teachers' expectations enable all pupils to achieve to the best of their ability
- R2 Ensure regular opportunities for foundation phase pupils to make choices about their learning in order to develop as independent learners
- R3 Raise the standard of pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills

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 good progress in their learning from their starting points.

On entry to the school, a majority of pupils' Welsh oral skills are lower than the standard expected for their age. During their time there, they make good progress in developing robust communication skills in both streams. Most pupils use the Welsh language confidently when responding to questions or completing challenges. For example, from an early age, many foundation phase pupils recall stories, such as 'Diwrnod Prysus Siôn Corn' ('Santa's Busy Day'), and discuss elements of it confidently. In the English stream, many develop useful Welsh vocabulary as they move through the school. They show a strong understanding of everyday phrases and respond to them sensibly. Most pupils across the school have effective listening skills.

Most pupils enjoy reading and make sound progress over time. From the reception class, many develop a firm foundation of letters and sounds quickly, and use this to read simple words and develop their confidence. By Year 2, most produce unfamiliar words successfully and read with purposeful expression. They discuss the content of books enthusiastically and refer to features in the text effectively. For example, in the English stream, pupils discuss the effect of cold weather on the postman as he delivers his letters. In both streams in key stage 2, most pupils continue to develop their reading skills robustly well. They vary their tone of voice and inflexion effectively when reading aloud to reflect what is happening in a story. Many more able pupils refer to the content of texts in detail to support their views. Most Year 6 pupils use their reading skills successfully, for example to research facts about the universe. The standard of most pupils' Welsh reading skills in the English stream is suitable for their age. They explain the text simply and enunciate words correctly when reading aloud.

Most pupils in both streams make effective progress in their writing skills in language lessons and other subjects. From the outset, foundation phase pupils write letters, words and simple phrases successfully. By Year 2, they develop as creative and skilful writers, for example when recounting their visit to Cardiff Castle. 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 script a radio advertisement to sell a time machine and create factual, mature pieces by using a range of different sources to support their views. However, pupils do not write to a standard that corresponds to their ability often enough. Pupils' Welsh second language writing skills are developing appropriately in the English stream, as they describe their preference for different foods, write postcards and create a short dialogue between a customer and a waiter. The standard of presentation of many pupils' work and handwriting is too varied across the school.

In the foundation phase, pupils' numeracy skills are sound and they apply them to a good standard across the curriculum. Most have a sound understanding of place value, shape, measurement, time and money. They interpret data with increasing

accuracy and present it in different forms, such as graphs, to show how pupils in the class travel to school. In key stage 2, most pupils develop a sound understanding of mathematics and achieve well. When given an opportunity, they apply their numeracy skills appropriately in other areas of the curriculum, particularly within their scientific investigations and during afternoon theme activities. A good example of this is the way in which Year 6 pupils use their knowledge of percentages to calculate profit when organising a Christmas party.

Many pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills develop gradually as they move through the school. In the foundation phase, many use an electronic tablet effectively when making a record of their work, and give instructions to an electronic toy to go on a journey to rescue Jack from the giant. Most pupils in key stage 2 use the internet effectively to search for information and create multimedia presentations successfully, for example when presenting their work on Antarctic animals to the youngest pupils. These pupils use spreadsheets confidently in order to calculate discounted prices of electronic items. However, overall, pupils do not apply their ICT skills consistently enough to a standard that corresponds with their age and ability. This limits their progress in this area.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to school and treat each other with obvious care. For example, the Year 6 buddies spend valuable time with the younger pupils during their first year at school. This has a positive effect on pupils' happiness in the foundation phase as they become more confident and settle into school life. Most pupils are polite, behave well and treat each other, staff and visitors with high levels of respect.

Most pupils show maturity when shouldering additional responsibilities, as they represent the pupil's voice on the school council or undertake an 'i-buddy' role. Super ambassadors are beginning to promote the school's values successfully and ensure that pupils understand how their rights are relevant to school life. Many pupils have a strong understanding of their responsibilities in caring for the environment through the meaningful work of the eco club. Recently, many pupils have responded positively to the opportunity to create bird boxes and plant more trees on the school grounds as part of a campaign to keep the air clean for residents of the village.

Most pupils have positive attitudes towards their work and persevere well with their tasks. They work effectively with their peers and respect the views of others. For example, members of the 'dreigiau doeth' work well together when organising activities to promote the Welsh language. Most pupils are beginning to contribute towards creating a variety of activities that are based on developing their skills. On the whole, key stage 2 pupils develop to become confident, independent learners. For example, Year 5 pupils create interesting questions on the effect of smoking for their peers to answer during cross-curricular sessions. Although foundation phase pupils contribute effectively towards what they would like to learn, rarely do they develop their independent skills by choosing where and when they would like to learn. Across the school, most pupils' contribution towards improving their own work, or that of their peers, is not as successful.

By running the fruit shop and rewarding healthy lunchboxes, the school council is beginning to have a good influence on most pupils' understanding of the need to eat healthily. Many pupils discuss the importance of taking part in exercise sessions knowledgeably, and enjoy attending various extra-curricular clubs, which include the multi-sports club and dance club. Taking part in weekly relaxation activities has a positive effect on pupils' mental health. Pupils in key stage 2 appreciate the opportunity to discuss any concerns that they have in 'drop-in' sessions, and know whom to approach, if necessary. Most older pupils have a beneficial understanding of the effect of social media. For example, they understand the negative effect that photo editing to change an image has on individuals' self-confidence and self-respect. Most pupils have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe online.

Many pupils develop as moral and conscientious citizens. They organise and take part in a number of varied activities, such as singing in an old people's home and raising money to help the homeless and cancer patients. One of the highlights of the week for pupils is the opportunity they are given to attend the Women's Institute in the village to teach them how to speak Welsh and how to use simple technology, while taking advantage of the opportunity to learn how to cook and sew. These experiences strengthen pupils' understanding of social issues and other people's needs successfully.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The school is proactive in preparing to introduce the principles of the new curriculum for Wales, and bases the content on themes and learning experiences that are interesting for pupils. A successful feature is the part that teachers give to pupils in providing suggestions and ideas for the title of the theme and what they would like to study. This engages pupils' interest and enthusiasm towards learning effectively, and strengthens their commitment to their work. A number of interesting visits are provided for pupils to support their themes, such as a visit to an exhibition on the Second World War and a visit to the Senedd. Staff plan interesting experiences in the forest school to develop pupils' communication and co-operation skills, for example through tasks to build a shelter.

The school has a natural Welsh ethos, which promotes pupils' enthusiasm towards the language successfully. Staff model polished Welsh regularly, which has a positive effect on their Welsh oral skills in the Welsh stream. Provision to develop pupils' Welsh language skills in the English stream develops gradually as they move from one stage to the next. Staff plan to promote Welsh history and culture effectively. For example, pupils are given beneficial opportunities to work with the winner of the crown in the National Eisteddfod and learn about the history of a nearby former coal mine.

There is a good working relationship between pupils and all staff. Many teachers remind pupils effectively of their previous learning and present learning objectives and instructions clearly in their lessons. They plan skilfully to develop pupils' thinking skills. Assistants provide effective support to enable pupils to complete their tasks and benefit from them successfully. Teachers are beginning to plan a range of activities with an appropriate level of challenge to meet pupils' learning needs. However, across the school, teachers do not always have high enough expectations

to ensure that all pupils achieve to the best of their ability. Teachers provide pupils with purposeful oral feedback and, on the whole, the school's specific strategy for providing written feedback is beginning to help pupils to improve their work purposefully.

Teachers provide a number of appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills successfully in other areas of the curriculum. Through various activities, pupils are given purposeful opportunities to develop their thinking skills effectively. For example, Year 2 pupils use the 'six thinking hats' strategy when working together to discover which material is best for keeping boiling water warm. Teachers are beginning to plan a range of suitable ICT activities for pupils within their schemes of work. However, they do not always ensure the necessary continuity and progression in all aspects of this area.

On the whole, the main principles of the foundation phase have been established purposefully. Teachers plan many interesting experiences for pupils to work indoors and outdoors. For example, they make good use of the school field and the forest area to develop pupils' creative skills, by encouraging them to collect natural materials, such as twigs, and arranging them by length to create model owls. However, although pupils contribute ideas to enrich the theme, most activities are over-directed by adults, which limits opportunities for pupils to make specific choices about their learning. As a result, opportunities for pupils to develop as independent learners are limited.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school is a caring and friendly community that promotes the importance of good behaviour successfully. As a result, pupils behave well, gain confidence and understand the importance of sharing concerns, when necessary.

The school has robust procedures to track and monitor pupils' progress and wellbeing. Staff identify pupils' educational and personal needs well, and use the detailed information that they have to identify the needs of pupils who need additional support. The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs is effective. Through a number of literacy, numeracy and wellbeing activities, staff ensure that all pupils receive the support necessary to succeed in their learning. Learning support staff are used successfully across the school to support individuals and groups, and to implement a range of valuable support programmes for them. This support helps pupils to engage well with their learning, and contributes effectively towards improving their standards and outcomes. As a result, most pupils make good progress in line with their targets over time. The school works closely with a variety of external agencies in order to provide beneficial support for pupils with special educational needs.

The school has purposeful procedures which ensure that provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is good. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to reflect and share their experiences when discussing that everyone is different, and the importance of friendship and kindness. The school ensures that it has broad provision and develops pupils' creative skills effectively. As a result, nearly all pupils are given beneficial opportunities in relation to the expressive arts. For example, they study and emulate the work of artists and compose with a Welsh singer. There

are opportunities for a majority of pupils to perform in eisteddfodau, concerts and services regularly. This contributes successfully towards developing their awareness of Welsh culture and fosters their self-confidence.

The school provides purposeful opportunities for pupils to shoulder various responsibilities. For example, the eco club has a very positive effect on school life and raises pupils' awareness of the effect of over-use of plastic and develops pupils' understanding of the sustainability of wildlife effectively. However, on the whole, there are not regular enough opportunities for pupils to play a full part in making decisions at a whole-school level.

The relationship between the school and parents is effective. The school informs parents about activities and events through newsletters, text messages and social media websites regularly. The school listens to parents' views and responds supportively to their ideas and concerns. A good example of this is the very recent changes to strengthen pupils' safety as they arrive at, and leave, school. The financial contribution of the parent and teacher association is very beneficial in terms of purchasing additional resources, such as technological equipment. Parents are also invited to the school to share their expertise and experience, for example as classical musicians and television presenters. This strengthens pupils' understanding of the different careers that are available to them in the wider world.

The school has effective arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily. The curriculum, physical education lessons and extra-curricular activities ensure that most pupils understand the advantages of regular exercise. This has a positive effect on pupils' understanding of issues that relate to their health and wellbeing. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

Although it has only been a very short time since she was appointed, the headteacher provides the school with enthusiastic and energetic leadership. She has shared her robust vision, which is based on supporting and inspiring pupils in order for them to develop to become healthy and successful learners, clearly with pupils, staff, parents and governors.

The headteacher has very high expectations of herself and staff, and since she began at the school, she has strengthened co-operation between staff across both streams. She ensures that there are purposeful opportunities for teachers to share work with each other and plan jointly. This is beginning to have a positive effect on staff's understanding of agreed standards. However, it is too early to see the effect of the co-operation process on standards of pupils' work on a whole-school level. Members of the acting senior management team fulfil their responsibilities purposefully, work together successfully and support the headteacher conscientiously.

Performance management arrangements are effective and contribute successfully towards staff's professional development. Staff's willingness and enthusiasm towards working with other schools in the local area provides valuable opportunities for them to share ideas and develop professionally. This contributes effectively

towards addressing recent developments in education, and the school responds successfully to national and local priorities. The school promotes Welshness, is preparing to introduce the new curriculum for Wales and plans purposeful opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in other areas of learning effectively. The school provides extensive opportunities for learning assistants to undertake training to support individual pupils and implement a range of intervention programmes successfully.

The school's self-evaluation arrangements are sound, and are based on a range of first-hand evidence of pupils' achievement, lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and conducting learning walks. There is a purposeful link between the findings of self-evaluation processes and the priorities in the development plan. Recent monitoring activities are honest and, as a result, leaders at all levels develop a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They ensure that these areas are at the heart of the further development of the school, and they are beginning to inform the school's work purposefully, such as developing pupils' thinking skills and ensuring consistency in the way in which teachers respond to pupils' work.

Members of the governing body are dedicated and supportive of the school. They fulfil their roles effectively. By working with staff and discussing examples of work with pupils, they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They use information well to make decisions in setting a strategic direction for the school's work. As a result, the governors' strategic role in holding the school to account for standards of work and the quality of teaching is developing successfully.

The school is staffed appropriately and good use is made of individuals' expertise to enrich pupils' learning experiences. Indoor and outdoor learning areas enrich pupils' learning experiences successfully. Staff use all resources successfully to support learning and promote pupils' wellbeing. The headteacher and governors manage funding carefully. Decisions on expenditure correspond clearly with priorities for improvement and meet pupils' needs successfully. Good use is made of the pupil development grant to improve provision to develop the literacy and numeracy skills and wellbeing of those pupils who are eligible to receive it. 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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