



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

A report on

Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera – Bro Dur

**Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera
Ynys y Darren Road
Glan Yr Afon
Ystalyfera
SA9 2DY**

Date of inspection: February 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera – Bro Dur

Name of provider	Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera – Bro Dur
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot
Language of the provider	Welsh medium
Type of school	All age
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	1491
Pupils of statutory school age	1262
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	36
Number in sixth form (if applicable)	176
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the secondary sector is 20.4%)</i>	14.6%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the secondary sector is 21.5%)</i>	19.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	45.2%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	October 2020
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	28th February 2022
Additional information	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different from those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website:
mylocalschool.gov.wales

(a) The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the school's SEN/ALN register.

Overview

Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur is a caring, inclusive Welsh community where effective support meets pupils' emotional, health and social needs. This was found to be significant recently when pupils needed particular support throughout the pandemic and on their return to school under the Covid-19 restrictions.

Most pupils interact happily and naturally with each other in lessons and at play times. They communicate politely and confidently with adults and are very welcoming towards visitors. Pupils are proud of their school and their Welshness. The school Senedd is extremely active and ensures that pupils play a key role in making decisions about the school's work.

In the wellbeing centres, 'Y Gilfach' and 'Y Gorwel', staff plan skilfully and provide valuable interventions. There is innovative provision for pupils with behavioural difficulties and emotional problems in the 'Stafell Stwnsh', and they are able to access a series of purposeful activities led by staff and their peers. This contributes significantly to developing pupils as well-rounded principled and knowledgeable citizens.

The headteacher is energetic, enthusiastic, and passionate about the school's future. She and the leadership team have a clear vision in terms of promoting Welshness and developing courteous pupils who take pride in themselves and their local communities. However, leaders do not communicate clearly enough which aspects should be celebrated as unique aspects of both sites and to what extent staff across the school are expected to work together. Leaders have made and maintained improvements in provision for pupils' wellbeing successfully. Again, planning for improvement is not always specific or effective enough.

The relationship between teachers and pupils is very positive and most staff are successful in creating a working environment that encourages and supports pupils. Across the school, they provide suitable experiences for pupils, which enable a majority of pupils to make sound progress as they move through the school and develop their skills appropriately. A majority of pupils speak confidently and maturely and write skilfully for different audiences. They read purposefully and express meaning clearly. Many pupils have sound number skills and make strong progress in their digital skills.

While there are strengths in the quality of teaching across the school, there are common shortcomings in a minority of teachers' planning. Overall, a minority of classroom activities and specific tasks do not provide enough challenge for pupils.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure more cohesive provision across the school to develop pupils' skills
- R2 Improve aspects of teaching to increase the level of challenge and provide varied experiences for pupils to ensure suitable progress
- R3 Sharpen self-evaluation and improvement planning processes

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to developing principled, knowledgeable pupils, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

On entry to the school's reception class, many pupils demonstrate literacy and numeracy skills that are lower than expected for their age. Many pupils make appropriate progress in their learning and a majority of pupils make sound progress as they move through the school. Many pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make suitable progress against their targets as a result of effective support and intervention. One particular feature is the way in which vulnerable pupils thrive and make sound progress. This is because of the way in which these pupils are motivated and supported to succeed.

Overall, a majority of pupils recall previous knowledge soundly and apply it well to new work, for example when naming parts of the respiratory system in science in Year 2 or when describing their favourite characters and discussing the book 'Pobl y Pants o'r Gofod'. When pupils do not make appropriate progress, this is often because of the nature of teaching.

From the beginning of their education at the school, most pupils listen respectfully to other pupils and teachers. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils show sound oracy skills in Welsh and English. Across the school, many pupils are willing to contribute verbally and a majority give extended answers and reasoning for their response, for example in the primary department when interpreting the exclamation mark and ensuring that they emphasise key elements with their voice. A few pupils use rich vocabulary and correct subject terminology in Welsh, for example when discussing positive and negative attitudes about sports in the media in their physical education lessons. A majority discuss with each other effectively, but a few have a tendency to give answers at the expense of others. As a result, a few pupils are less confident in expressing themselves verbally at times and appear reticent in classes. A few use fragmented language and have a tendency to turn to English in less formal situations. Sixth form pupils speak confidently and maturely when discussing their work and life at the school.

Across the school, many read purposefully to gather information. For example, pupils in Years 4 and 5 use a range of reading strategies when looking at the context and use familiar words to help them to find the meaning of new words. Many primary age pupils read aloud confidently and with suitable intonation. Secondary pupils have few opportunities to read aloud, but many locate facts skilfully and come to valid conclusions as a result of reading evidence. They understand the meaning of texts well and specific aspects of persuasive writing. Many show a sound understanding of characters and themes in novels and poetry and, in their Welsh lessons, analyse style skilfully. Although many pupils have a good understanding of the content of English texts, they are less certain when discussing the style and effect of linguistic choices. Overall, across the subjects, pupils' higher-order reading skills have not been developed adequately to be able to interpret and read between the lines effectively.

When writing in Welsh and English, a majority of pupils across the school use suitable vocabulary. Many demonstrate strong writing skills and write effectively for

different purposes and various audiences. The most able pupils have rich and sophisticated vocabulary. Many pupils across the age ranges write at length freely and communicate with clear expression. They organise their work sensibly and use paragraphs correctly. They make effective use of writing techniques such as empathy, persuasion, and the use of similes.

Pupils in key stage 2 write with increasing confidence in various genres, display a sound grasp of punctuation and vary their sentences to create effect. For example, they create a detailed factual report following a visit to Gleision Colliery memorial as part of their work on the theme of 'Yma ac acw' ('Here and there'). Many secondary age pupils discuss visual literature confidently and are able to use film technique vocabulary successfully and correctly, for example when discussing camera effects to depict the emotions and feelings of the character in the film Hedd Wyn. However, a minority of pupils make errors when writing, and make careless spelling and grammatical mistakes, and a few do not write in full sentences in response to reading.

Most pupils' numeracy skills are developing well across the age range. Many pupils have sound number, shape and measuring skills. For example, in their mathematics lessons, pupils calculate money totals and compare profit after making different investments successfully. Many pupils analyse data effectively, plot graphs correctly and use them to come to sensible conclusions. From an early age, they have a strong understanding of measurement, for example when measuring the height of individuals by using twigs as non-standard units.

Pupils of all ages make strong progress in their digital skills. This is highlighted across the curriculum subjects, for example in their use of specialist software to plan products, compose music or adapt digital pictures. Pupils in the primary department develop their digital, thinking, and problem-solving skills well, for example by steering a programmable toy across a grid successfully.

Across the school, pupils develop their thinking and creative skills strongly when they are given an opportunity to do so. For example, a high level of creativity can be seen when practising for a drama presentation and many pupils develop their creative skills effectively in their art lessons. Primary age pupils are inventive and creative, for example when creating models to represent Wales and Welshness on St David's Day.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Across the school, most pupils interact happily and naturally with each other during lessons, break times and lunchtimes. They communicate politely and confidently with adults and are very welcoming towards visitors. Pupils are proud to be a part of the familial Welsh community at Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur.

Most pupils say that they feel safe at the school and know who to approach if something is worrying them. They are aware of the importance of staying safe online and understand what they should do if something is causing them concern.

Most pupils understand the importance and significance of maintaining their emotional wellbeing and mental health, particularly as a result of the pandemic. Many

pupils show sensitivity and help and support their friends and peers when something is worrying them. A majority of older pupils are aware of the importance of offering guidance to their younger fellow pupils and present themselves as positive role models for them. For example, some sixth form pupils provide support in the 'Stafell Stwnsh' and 'Cynnydd' rooms to support the mental health of younger pupils.

Most pupils see the benefit of physical activity and many enjoy outdoor activities. The wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities has a very positive effect on their health and wellbeing. Many pupils make sensible choices in terms of eating and drinking healthily, for example as Year 3 pupils explain which drinks are the healthiest.

Many pupils contribute fully to the school's life and work and believe that the school listens to their views and responds to their aspirations and ideas. They feel that everyone's rights are respected and that this contributes to creating a caring and inclusive community. The school Senedd discusses key issues maturely. They take ownership and lead in raising pupils' awareness of issues such as the value of the Welsh language in the world of work and respecting the identity of LGBTQ individuals.

Most pupils show a positive attitude to their learning. Across the school, pupils' close and constructive relationship with teachers and support staff promotes their confidence successfully.

From the very beginning of the nursery class, despite the lockdown periods, children settle quickly and learn to share and play with their peers in the different areas. Most pupils in the foundation phase and key stage 2 take pride in their work and enjoy showing examples of which they are proud. For example, they enjoy talking and expressing an opinion about different Welsh foods that they experienced as part of the St David's Day celebrations.

When they are given the opportunity to do so, most secondary aged pupils work together maturely on their tasks. For example, in Year 8 they listen carefully to their peers' ideas and consider their views when discussing the protest of residents of Mynydd Epynt.

A majority of pupils show resilience and perseverance to complete their work successfully. For example, in Years 5 and 6 as they interpret data to prepare a presentation based on the weather in different locations around the world.

Most pupils behave well during lessons, group activities and around the school buildings and grounds.

Teaching and learning experiences

The main strength of teaching across the school is the strong and positive relationship between teachers and pupils. Nearly all teachers develop a close and supportive working relationship with their pupils and most create a successful work environment. They are supportive of their pupils, encourage them to participate and praise their efforts.

In a few sessions, where teaching is strong and highly effective, teachers are enthusiastic about their subject or area of learning and transfer that enthusiasm to pupils energetically and passionately. These teachers deliver engaging presentations and ensure interesting and constructive learning experiences. Tasks are planned effectively to ensure that pupils make strong progress in their skills and knowledge by taking advantage of opportunities to discuss, think and solve problems jointly.

Many teachers have sound knowledge that enables them to deliver their subject or area of learning confidently. They are good language models and ensure appropriate linguistic support for pupils so that they can contribute orally or complete written work successfully. For example, they provide specific vocabulary and terminology and set beneficial writing structures for speaking and writing tasks. Many teachers present clearly, provide clear explanations and give beneficial support while pupils work.

A majority of teachers plan beneficial opportunities for pupils to make progress. They ensure that lesson aims are purposeful and plan tasks that usually build on each other. They prepare and use relevant resources to support teaching and learning, and this includes a wide range of digital resources.

Although there are strengths in the quality of teaching across the school, there are common shortcomings in the planning of a minority of teachers. This relates mainly to the nature of the tasks and the pace of learning. In particular, these teachers do not plan their sessions carefully enough to ensure varied learning experiences and an appropriate challenge. This means that pupils do not achieve enough and make as much progress as they could in sessions and over time. In less successful sessions, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to influence their learning, work together on tasks or show and share their work with the class. In these sessions, either too many short, repetitive tasks are set, or simple tasks that last too long. Too often, activities do not encourage pupils to think for themselves or to take responsibility for their own learning.

Most teachers ask short, punchy questions to check pupils' understanding in sessions and in order to move learning forward. In a minority of sessions, the teachers ask searching and incisive questions to probe pupils' memory and understanding and encourage them to think more deeply. This contributes well to developing pupils' thinking and problem-solving skills. A minority of teachers summarise learning successfully in the middle and at the end of sessions. For example, they gather beneficial feedback from pupils or give them an opportunity to model answers and ask others to evaluate the quality of the responses.

Most teachers identify strengths in pupils' work and provide appropriate written comments on its content. They praise effort and good work consistently. However, the quality and effectiveness of teachers' feedback is varied. A majority of teachers give useful feedback to pupils on how to improve their work and ensure that they respond appropriately. In other cases, comments are superficial, too short, or too generous.

The school has a clear vision for the Curriculum for Wales, which is based on raising pupils' ambitions and providing experiences that develop pupils' identity in addition to their understanding of their local area, Wales, and the world. Both sites have purposeful strategic planning that is tailored to their provision to reflect the unique

context of both areas and respond to pupils' needs. As part of this work, the secondary department has planned valuable activities on the history and experiences of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities to reflect the link between the former local industries and countries such as Jamaica. In the primary department, there are examples of purposeful planning to develop pupils' skills in line with the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. Learning experiences are varied and cohesive and are based on stimulating themes that dovetail a number of areas of learning and experience.

The current curriculum builds productively on pupils' previous learning. Rich experiences are provided for pupils in the primary department, including valuable opportunities to visit the local area. For example, foundation phase pupils visit an old people's home to hold art sessions with the residents to celebrate strong relationships in the community. This fosters pupils' confidence, their Welsh communication skills, and their creative and social skills. In key stage 4 and the sixth form, there is a wide choice of courses. This includes a variety of courses for more able and talented pupils, such as additional mathematics and two modern languages, and vocational courses such as hairdressing and beauty, and a joinery course.

There are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their digital skills across the curriculum, and opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills are appropriate. The school has beneficial interventions to support pupils with weak skills. However, planning to develop literacy and numeracy skills is not strategic enough.

A notable example of the school's provision is the valuable range of extra-curricular activities that are available. This includes kindness, coding, woodwork, dance, fashion and surfing clubs. Interesting educational visits and local and foreign residential trips are also organised. Welsh is the medium of teaching in most cases and the school provides effectively to develop pupils' Welshness. The school's provision to develop pupils' understanding of Welsh culture is a strength, for example through the educational trip to visit Beddgelert and the home of Hedd Wyn in Trawsfynydd.

The school has a beneficial and comprehensive personal and social education programme. The programme intertwines effectively with the health and wellbeing curriculum and 'Dysgu gorau, dysgu byw' lessons to support the development of pupils' social and emotional skills. Leaders adapt provision regularly to meet pupils' current needs and after seeking pupils' views on provision. Good use is made of external agencies, such as the school nurse, the police, the fire brigade, and guest speakers from different charities to enrich provision. As a result, pupils are given strong support to make healthy choices about their lifestyle.

Care, support and guidance

Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera Bro Dur is a caring, inclusive, Welsh community in which there is effective support to meet pupils' emotional, health and social needs. Pupils are given valuable opportunities to develop into principled individuals and learn about their industrial history and Welsh culture.

In the wellbeing centres, staff at 'Y Gilfach' and 'Y Gorwel' plan skilfully and provide valuable interventions to improve pupils' numeracy and literacy skills and support their emotional needs. There is a myriad of purposeful intervention programmes in place and they are tailored to pupils' individual needs. Pupils who have found reintegrating after the lockdown periods challenging benefit from intervention sessions to develop their confidence.

There is innovative provision for pupils with behavioural difficulties and emotional problems in the 'Stafell Stwnsh' and 'Cynnydd' rooms, and pupils are able to access a series of purposeful, timely activities, including input from Swansea Football Club. This provision ensures that pupils are given an opportunity to receive support during the school day. Primary age pupils use feelings charts and diaries to record their emotions regularly.

The school's safeguarding and child protection arrangements are strong. Appropriate and regular training is organised for staff on safeguarding issues. As a result, pupils understand their role and responsibility to keep pupils' safe. The school has robust arrangements to respond to any concerns about pupils and relevant staff work effectively with external statutory agencies. A notable aspect of the school's work is the provision to promote equality and tolerance and celebrate diversity.

The Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators [ALNCos] work together purposefully and their rigorous knowledge of pupils ensures that effective support is provided. Appropriate input is received from a number of agencies and partners to ensure provision of a high standard. The school is preparing to implement the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Act by ensuring that staff have received training on pupil-centred approaches. The one-page profiles of ALN pupils include relevant information about how to support pupils. The school monitors ALN pupils' progress and reports to parents regularly.

The school Senedd is very active and meets regularly to inform decisions about the school's future. Older members of the Senedd have provided beneficial guidance and support to Year 9 pupils when choosing their GCSE subjects. A large number of sub-committees have been established to ensure that pupils' views have a strong influence on the school's work. In addition to an eco-committee and a Welshness committee, pupils have shown initiative by establishing a children's rights sub-committee, an LGBTQ+ committee and a curriculum committee. The Welshness committee has raised pupils' awareness of Welsh music by playing contemporary songs at break time and lunchtime.

The school presents religious and moral aspects to pupils in a contemporary and relevant manner, such as an assembly on Lent to encourage pupils to reduce their screen time. A 'Munud i Feddwl' (Moment to Reflect) programme ensures that pupils receive a weekly moral message on topics such as Archbishop Tutu, black people's rights and whether Britain should help people from Ukraine.

The school provides a valuable range of activities for pupils in sports and the arts. Pupils are given rich opportunities to develop their creative skills, for example by creating pastel paintings inspired by their local area in the style of the local artist, Josef Herman.

The school has robust systems to monitor and promote good attendance. The school works effectively with the local education authority to support pupils to reintegrate successfully after the pandemic. Arrangements to support pupils to behave appropriately are very robust and any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with swiftly. As a result, most pupils behave exceptionally well in their lessons and around the school.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is energetic and enthusiastic and is ambitious and passionate about the school's future. The leadership team supports her robustly. It has a clear vision to promote Welshness and develop courteous pupils who take pride in themselves and their local communities. This vision is embraced fully by all of the school's stakeholders.

Senior leaders have a good understanding of the main strengths and areas for improvement. Many middle leaders have a sound understanding of pupils' standards and the quality of provision within their areas of responsibility. They are able to speak confidently about these aspects based on evidence that they have gathered directly from regular quality assurance activities. Robust leadership has had a positive effect on several aspects of the school's work, including developing a successful culture of safeguarding, comprehensive wellbeing provision and improvements in pupils' skills despite the challenges of the pandemic.

Over the last two years, co-operation between staff at the different sites has increased. For example, the ALN co-ordinators work together beneficially and there have been lesson observations between the primary and secondary staff. Consistency has also been ensured in senior leadership across the sites, with senior leaders from both sites meeting weekly and more activities and processes to unify the sites, such as common online services for the whole school community. However, leaders do not convey clearly enough which aspects should be celebrated as unique aspects of the individual sites or to what extent staff across the school are expected to work together.

The line management system is suitable. Regular meetings are organised that provide beneficial opportunities for leaders to meet their line managers, but there is inconsistency in how leaders implement this system. Leaders' roles and responsibilities are well-defined and staff and pupils understand leaders' main overall responsibilities. However, leaders' roles and responsibilities are not completely clear or allocated logically or in a balanced manner. For example, there is a difference between the responsibilities of middle leaders at the two sites and some members of the senior leadership team are expected to act as department heads in addition to their cross-school responsibilities.

The school has a clear plan and calendar for self-evaluation. This programme is implemented consistently across the school and includes beneficial activity, such as lesson observations and scrutinising pupils' work. All leaders take part in these processes and many use the findings effectively to evaluate their work. However, systems for gathering information do not focus specifically enough on pupils' skills or the quality of provision. An over-reliance on compliance procedures prevents leaders from gaining a detailed enough picture of strengths and areas for development.

There is a suitable link between the school's self-evaluation findings and the main priorities to ensure improvement. Since the current headteacher was appointed, there is one appropriate improvement plan for the school, with common main priorities across the whole school. Responding to the effects of the pandemic is high among the school's priorities. For example, it has made and maintained improvements in provision for pupils' wellbeing successfully. Again, planning for improvement is not always specific or effective enough. Improvement priorities are too broad and do not focus clearly enough on the main issues that need to be addressed, for example the challenge in teaching and leadership roles. There are also no clear milestones and monitoring arrangements are too open-ended to ensure full accountability.

There is an appropriate system for managing staff performance and beneficial opportunities for them to review progress against their targets three times a year. Objectives correspond to the school's priorities and individuals' professional development needs. These objectives are often very broad or too operational, and methods for monitoring and evaluating progress do not always focus enough on their effect on pupils.

The school has a broad offer of professional development opportunities for staff. These opportunities encompass whole-school activities on aspects of teaching and the new curriculum. There are various opportunities for individuals to gain experiences and training in areas that are relevant to their personal development. For example, at Bro Dur, all teachers benefit from taking part in personal research. There is a clear procedure for supporting staff who need further support to improve their practice, and leaders tailor this provision to the needs of these individuals.

The headteacher and business manager manage the school's budget carefully and the school currently has a surplus. Their expenditure on the numerous grants that they have received over recent years is appropriate and has contributed positively to the school's wellbeing provision in particular.

Governors are very supportive of the school and undertake their roles enthusiastically. They have a good understanding of many of the main strengths and areas for improvement. They enrich their knowledge of the school by taking part in activities such as learning walks and meetings with middle leaders. They challenge the school appropriately on a variety of aspects and act effectively as a critical friend. They have begun to plan to improve provision for eating and drinking healthily but acknowledge that this is an area for improvement, in particular how much food pupils receive in the canteens.

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/members of the management committee 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, middle leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work 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 lessons, 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
- 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' well-being, 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 (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>)

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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