



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

A report on

Ysgol Gynradd Carrog

**Carrog
Nr Corwen
LL21 9AW**

Date of inspection: November 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Gynradd Carrog

Name of provider	Ysgol Gynradd Carrog
Local authority	Denbighshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	42
Pupils of statutory school age	38
Number in nursery classes	
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Primary is 21.3%)	16.0%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 22.2%)	21.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	23.8%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2012
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	24/01/2012
Start date of inspection	21/11/2022

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to 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 SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Leaders and staff across the Ysgol Caer Drewyn and Ysgol Carrog Federation work well together to provide a stimulating and purposeful learning environment for all pupils. They have high expectations and aspirations for pupils to be the best that they can be. Developing strong attitudes to learning, respect for others and supporting the well-being of pupils and staff is at the heart of the federation's vision and values. As a result, pupils feel safe and valued and contribute well to the life of their school.

Teachers and other staff at Ysgol Carrog adapt the teaching and learning very well to meet the needs of learners. Effective teaching and learning, together with a rich, diverse curriculum, ensure that pupils are interested in their learning and work well independently and with peers to complete their 'missions' or challenges. This helps to foster positive attitudes to learning and effective independent learning skills. Pupils receive purposeful opportunities to practise their literacy, numeracy and digital skills well through rich tasks and learning experiences, but the provision for Welsh across the school is less well developed. In addition, pupils' ability to recognise what they are doing well and how they can improve their work is limited.

The headteacher, other leaders and members of the governing body know their community well. They have a good understanding of the needs of their pupils and their families and work diligently with other stakeholders to support them as best they can. This is a strength of the school and helps to foster positive relationships across the whole school community. As a result, nearly all pupils make good progress at the school.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve opportunities for pupils to develop and make good progress in their Welsh speaking skills
- R2 Strengthen teachers' feedback and opportunities for pupils to reflect on their work so that they know what to do to improve

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 a rich curriculum and effective teaching that meets the needs of all learners and promotes strong attitudes to learning, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

Although many pupils start school with skills at a stage of development below that expected for their age, nearly all pupils make strong progress from their starting points. They develop and apply a suitable range of skills that allows them to succeed in their work across the curriculum. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make good progress in line with their individual targets.

Most pupils develop their English literacy skills well. Younger pupils develop listening and speaking skills successfully from an early age, for example when they retell a familiar story. They talk confidently with visitors about the work on the classroom walls. Older pupils develop a growing range of vocabulary and, by the end of Year 6, most speak with increasingly mature expression. From an early age, nearly all pupils develop a sound understanding of the sounds that different letters make and this helps them to make strong progress in their reading skills as they progress through the school. Nearly all pupils read with a good degree of fluency in English by the end of Year 6 and use their skills well to find information in unfamiliar texts. Most younger pupils develop sound writing skills and, by the end of Year 2, many write interesting extended pieces of text. For example, they recount stories from the Bible, such as the miracle of Jesus curing a blind man. Older pupils apply their writing skills to different contexts suitably. For example, they write an informative report about volcanoes, and describe the city of Pompeii, choosing suitable adjectives for effect. They also convey information about Yr Wyddfa clearly in attractive pamphlets. However, pupils do not refine their work in light of feedback well enough. As a result, their written work is not always as good as it could be.

Most pupils become familiar with a few Welsh words and phrases from an early age. However, they do not develop as confident Welsh speakers, and overall pupils make limited progress in developing Welsh language skills.

In general, pupils make good progress in developing an understanding of mathematical concepts, such as number, shape and measure. For example, younger pupils arrange leaves in hoops in the outdoor areas to represent different fractions, and older pupils draw upon prior learning well to solve problems. Many pupils use their numeracy skills suitably in their work across the curriculum. For example, younger pupils make accurate block charts to record how their peers travel to school. Older pupils work out the area and volume of football stadia that they design using a virtual 3D model building program.

Younger pupils make sound progress in developing digital skills. They control a programmable toy skilfully to send it to the desired destination and use a stopwatch accurately to time activities in the outdoor area. Older pupils apply their digital skills well, for example to make presentations about road safety that combine images, text and voiceovers.

Across the school, pupils' creative and thinking skills develop well. Younger pupils use musical instruments such as bells, cymbals and harmonicas to accompany the story of Branwen from Welsh mythology. They develop problem solving skills

effectively by working as a team, for example to create a model bridge out of paper so that Bendigeidfran can cross from Wales to Ireland without getting wet. Older pupils use their thinking skills well to build a bridge within a given budget, using tyres and planks. They develop their creative skills well by planning their own dance to tell a story set to music, conveying the scene as the peace of a forest is interrupted by a fire breathing dragon.

From an early age, most pupils begin to develop good physical skills. Younger pupils develop strong fine motor skills, for example when taking part in purposeful activities set to music to strengthen their hands by manipulating plasticine. The younger pupils use tricycles and pushbikes suitably to develop gross motor skills. Nearly all pupils take part in regular physical education lessons with enthusiasm. For example, younger pupils respond well to challenges that help them to improve their balance and co-ordination, and older pupils take part in football sessions to mark the start of the football World Cup.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

The positive, caring and nurturing relationship that exists among pupils and between staff and pupils is a strength of the school. Nearly all pupils feel that adults in the school care about them and, as a result they feel safe and valued. They are kind, polite and respectful towards adults and other pupils. For example, older pupils sit with younger pupils during lunchtime to help and support them. Nearly all pupils know whom to approach for advice if anything is worrying them and are confident that staff respond immediately and deal effectively with any concerns they have.

Nearly all pupils treat each other fairly and with respect. Most pupils understand the importance of maintaining positive attitudes to their work and how this helps them to overcome challenges in their learning. Most pupils work well independently and with their peers in pairs or groups to solve problems. As a result, they develop as mature and independent learners. Most pupils are developing appropriate thinking skills and techniques to help them succeed and persevere when completing tasks independently. For example, pupils use strategies such as 'Tri Cyn Fi' ('Three Before Me') effectively to progress with their tasks. As a result, pupils across the school develop resilience and confidence when persevering with their work in their classes and when engaging in practical outdoor tasks.

Most pupils feel that school leaders listen to them and that their contribution to school life is appreciated. Members of the various school councils are proud of their roles and take their duties seriously. Representatives undertake their work enthusiastically through a variety of activities and make a valuable contribution to the school's life and work. For example, members of the eco committee are very active in encouraging pupils to respect the school environment and the wider environment. They monitor classroom electricity and water use and recycle plastic and paper. The various school councils and pupil voice groups ensure that pupils, staff and governors are informed of their work by delivering presentations in assemblies. For example, the 'Road and Sun Safety council' prepared and delivered an informative presentation.

Nearly all pupils have a sound understanding of how to keep themselves safe online and visits from the community police officer reinforce this. For example, they know

the importance of protecting their personal information and reporting concerns to an adult. Nearly all pupils are confident to speak to visitors about their work, hobbies and interests. Most behave well in lessons and around the school at breaktimes. They understand the school rules – be ready, be respectful, be safe – and refer to them regularly in class. They listen carefully to their peers and to adults, and most sustain their concentration well, especially when the task interests them.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of eating and drinking healthily and understand the effect of physical exercise on their health. Younger pupils explain why it is beneficial to eat a balanced diet, for example when planning a healthy picnic. They participate enthusiastically in a range of physical activities inside and outside of the school, which has a positive effect on their well-being and fitness.

Many pupils develop as ethical and knowledgeable citizens through their awareness of fairness and equality. They respect the needs and rights of others as part of a diverse society. A good example of this is the work they do on Martin Luther King and their discussions based on African and Caribbean stories and cultures. Most pupils contribute purposefully to what they learn and have a positive influence on class topics. For example, they take advantage of the opportunity to share their interests and ideas by contributing regularly to the 'Lliwiau'r Enfys' (Rainbow Colours) wall. As a result, most pupils participate with enthusiasm and a high level of engagement when completing their 'missions' or challenges.

In general, pupils value and respond effectively to verbal feedback from adults to enrich and move their learning forward. However, their ability to reflect on and improve their work is less well developed.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative effect nationally on attendance last year, the school's attendance rate over the same period is significantly higher than the average. The attendance rates to date continue to be higher than the national average, and this is a strong feature of the school.

Teaching and learning experiences

Leaders have a clear vision for implementing the Curriculum for Wales at Ysgol Carrog. This is based on the federation's shared values, such as kindness, curiosity and creativity, which are evident across the school's provision. Staff support each other well and take part in valuable professional learning opportunities to develop the federation's approach to teaching and learning. As a result, leaders, teachers and support staff work together successfully to discuss progress and improve practice. For example, they have developed joint responsibilities for leading aspects of the curriculum across both schools in the federation. This is particularly effective in developing aspects such as health and wellbeing which support pupils' emotional and physical development well. Although staff use words and phrases in Welsh regularly during activities, opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills are generally underdeveloped.

Leaders and staff have well-established plans to support the teaching of literacy, numeracy and digital skills. They have adapted their arrangements to reflect the progression steps of the curriculum for Wales. As a result, the school's planning for teaching and learning is flexible and provides an appropriate focus on developing

pupils skills across the curriculum. Across the federation, staff take good account of the four purposes of Curriculum for Wales when developing the pupils as independent lifelong learners. An effective example of this is the '50 things to experience before I leave Ysgol Carrog,' which includes a wide and valuable range of experiences, designed to enrich the pupils' lives. For example, staff encourage pupils to develop as healthy, confident individuals through engaging in discussions with older members of the community and to walk up the nearby Owain Glyndwr's mount.

The provision for foundation learning is based on a broad range of enriching opportunities to develop pupils' skills and independence. Pupils gain confidence through a wide range of learning opportunities inside and outside the classroom. Staff provide a good range of stimulating activities that develop the pupils' enthusiasm and collaborative skills effectively.

Ysgol Carrog pupils benefit from being part of a close knit and supportive community. The staff provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to learn about the history and traditions of the area. Ysgol Carrog and Ysgol Caer Drewyn pupils were involved with a local project in which the pupils created artwork based on the picturesque Dee valley. Pupils from both schools were also involved in a project based at the Corwen museum which commemorated the centenary of the First World War, and the local servicemen who lost their lives during different campaigns. In addition, staff provide valuable opportunities for parents and carers to share their skills and expertise with pupils to enrich their learning.

Leaders and staff have adapted their approaches to teaching in line with the Curriculum for Wales. Across the school, staff have a strong working bond with pupils and set high expectations. They use effective questioning and verbal feedback well to support and challenge pupils' learning. Activities have good pace and pupils receive regular opportunities to share their ideas with their peers in pairs and small groups. However, in a few activities, the use of work-sheets limits pupils' opportunities to extend their ideas.

Staff use a calm and supportive approach and maintain high expectations of pupils' behaviour. As a result, most pupils remain engaged in learning for extended periods. Teachers share learning intentions and success criteria with pupils appropriately. This provides suitable opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning during activities. However, teachers do not always provide suitable opportunities for pupils to reflect on their work and make improvements following feedback. As a result, pupils do not always extend their work to the best of their ability.

Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to suggest aspects of topics that they would like to learn about through their 'Lleisiau'r Enfys' approach. Teachers develop the pupils' ideas into interesting independent learning activities that provide pupils with valuable opportunities to apply their skills in engaging and challenging contexts. Pupils select the activity at the level of challenge which they consider to be appropriate for them. This develops their independence successfully.

Leaders are developing their approach to assessment through adopting a more effective method of tracking pupils' progress. This is based on agreed criteria and focusses well on pupils' well-being and attitudes to learning. In addition, teachers make effective use of a wealth of useful information when planning the next steps for

pupils' learning. Teachers share information regularly with parents and carers about their children's progress and well-being, which helps them to understand how they can support them at home.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring, inclusive and friendly community that promotes the importance of good behaviour successfully. Positive relationships are a strong feature across the whole school, and this contributes effectively to pupils' happiness and well-being. Staff support the emotional and social needs of pupils exceptionally well by offering purposeful and suitable interventions.

Nearly all members of staff provide effective guidance to help parents and carers to develop their understanding of how to support their children. Regular information evenings and the close relationship between staff and parents and carers are key to this. They are also welcomed into the school to participate in activities with pupils, such as the activities in the outdoor nature area.

The school has effective arrangements in place to identify, support and monitor pupils with additional learning needs across the school. These include a clear provision map, useful one-page profiles and individual development plans that outline the pupils' needs and required support well. Every pupil also has their own individual targets identified by the teacher in collaboration with the pupil. Staff identify the pupils who could benefit from additional support at an early stage. They provide a purposeful variety of interventions that help pupils to make valuable progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills as well as improving their well-being. For example, individual support for pupils with emotional needs helps them to feel calm at school and enjoy their learning. The headteacher and Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCO) place strong emphasis on partnership work with external agencies that provides effective support for pupils with additional learning needs. For example, they work well with the speech and language specialist team to support pupils' language skills.

The school has suitable arrangements to promote exercise and healthy eating, so that the pupils understand the importance of choosing a healthy lifestyle. For example, the younger pupils group healthy and less healthy food together and the older pupils learn the importance of healthy organs creatively using natural materials in the outdoor area. In addition, the outdoor play areas and extra-curricular activities provide beneficial opportunities for physical exercise. The school makes effective use of the community police officer to support pupils in developing their knowledge and understanding of a variety of personal safety issues, including how to keep safe online.

Teachers provide a variety of valuable experiences to promote pupils' moral, spiritual and cultural development. They provide useful opportunities to reflect on current affairs and various religions in assemblies and class activities. For example, they re-tell the story of Jesus calming the storm and compare pilgrimages to special stories from the pupils' own experiences. Teachers also provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to celebrate their Welsh heritage and culture, from celebrating the life of Owain Glyndwr, who had strong links with the local area, to reciting in the Urdd Eisteddfod and going on residential visits to the nearby outdoor centre and Cardiff.

The school ensures that pupils develop an understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion by providing a variety of creative and interesting activities. For example, they learn about life in Ghana and discuss issues such as equality and fairness in today's society through their work on 'Black History Month'. The school has valuable partnerships with charities and the wider community, which supports pupils' learning and their understanding of diversity and inclusion. Pupils participate in a range of initiatives to promote anti-bullying and display posters and other material on the qualities of good friendships around the school. This has a positive impact on their understanding of the importance of caring for each other and knowing the difference between right and wrong. The school's provision ensures that pupils have a good understanding of their rights.

By enabling pupils to lead various activities in their pupil groups, staff encourage learners to become active citizens. For example, the 'Eco Council' has created a bug hotel in the millennium garden and they plant flowers and vegetables to enrich the school environment. The 'Road and Sun Safety Council' organised a competition to design a jacket or item of clothing that will keep them safe outdoors. The school provides effective guidance and advice to learners which raises their aspirations and possible future career choices, for example arranging visits to a local university for pupils and their families to learn more about their work.

The school's procedures for promoting good attendance are a strong feature of the provision. Leaders monitor attendance rigorously and promote good attendance purposefully. This is having a positive impact on pupils' attendance, which compares well with national benchmarks. Leaders set high expectations for the safety of pupils and have established a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. They ensure that all staff understand and promote the school's safeguarding culture effectively. The school's arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management

Ysgol Carrog is part of a school federation with a neighbouring school, Ysgol Caer Drewyn and the headteacher shares her leadership time between both schools. Leaders and teachers from both schools are responsible for various aspects of the provision across the federation. This allows leaders to make good use of the staff specialisms and expertise to support learning on both sites. The headteacher has worked diligently with stakeholders to create and communicate a clear vision for the federation, which focusses on ensuring a caring and nurturing environment where pupils have the best opportunities to learn. The well-being of staff, pupils and their families is at the heart of the work of both schools. The headteacher sets high expectations for the whole school community across the federation, with a strong emphasis on the staff of both schools supporting one another to achieve the best possible outcomes for all pupils.

The headteacher and deputy headteachers have established a strong team ethos across the federation where staff feel valued, respected and cared for. All staff model and promote professional values and behaviour that contribute positively pupils' outcomes. They understand and fulfil their roles and responsibilities well and support important aspects of the work of both schools, for example by leading on areas of learning and experience and by undertaking the role of ALNCO. Leaders and staff

readily adapt and evolve their provision effectively to meet the needs of their learners. They ensure that they provide a rich and diverse curriculum that stimulates pupils' interest and develops strong attitudes to learning. This means that nearly all pupils across both schools make strong progress in their learning and show healthy attitudes to learning.

Members of the governing body know the school communities very well and provide effective support and challenge. They understand their roles and responsibilities well and know the strengths and areas for development across the federation of schools. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has lessened their monitoring and pastoral visits to the schools, they continue to provide appropriate challenge to leaders and contribute effectively to important decisions, for example when deciding on appropriate attendance targets for both schools, having considered data from previous years to inform their decision. The governing body ensures that the school has comprehensive arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders prioritise challenging the impact of poverty on educational attainment very well. This includes subsidising residential and other visits to places of interest for pupils eligible for free school meals and those from low-income households. The school plays a prominent role in the wider community and works very well with other agencies that provide support to pupils and their families. For example, leaders and staff work alongside the local authority's family link worker to provide much needed support to families who are struggling to make ends meet. In addition, leaders ensure that staff receive a suitable range of resources and professional learning to help support pupils and their families, for example by providing additional support to meet their well-being and emotional needs.

Leaders and staff have established strong links with parents and carers and the wider community which is having a positive impact on pupils learning and wellbeing. Whenever possible, parents and carers are invited into the school to support pupils and to learn more about how they can support their children. For example, they recently attended the school to support pupils' outdoor learning through wildlife crafts and making mini ponds to create habitats for frogs.

Leaders have established purposeful arrangements to monitor and evaluate the work of both schools. Although the COVID-19 pandemic restricted monitoring activities, leaders and staff have continued to evaluate the quality of the provision and standards. Teachers scrutinise books across both schools and the headteacher conducts informal observations of teaching and learning as well as listening to pupils' views and opinions whenever possible. As a result, leaders have a strong understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. For example, they recognise the need to improve provision for developing pupils' Welsh skills. There is a clear link between the findings of the self-evaluation process and the school's identified priorities, which include important national priorities such as the Curriculum for Wales. Although the targets and actions link appropriately to the needs of the school, leaders do not identify well enough which areas need prioritising in order of importance.

Leaders have created a positive culture and ethos to promote and support the professional learning of all staff. There is a strong emphasis on ensuring that staff's professional learning focusses on teaching and learning as well as supporting the

emotional and well-being needs of pupils. The headteacher also supports staff to develop their professional knowledge and leadership skills, which allows them to lead on important aspects of the provision. This is having a positive impact on teaching and learning across the federation, for example by allowing teachers and leaders to develop the areas of learning and experience across both schools.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer 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/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) 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 undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- 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' 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 (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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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