



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

A report on

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Ynyswen

**Clinic Road
Ynyswen
Treorchy
Rhondda Cynon Taf
CF42 6ED**

Date of inspection: December 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Ynyswen

Name of provider	Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Ynyswen
Local authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	257
Pupils of statutory school age	206
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	21
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 primary sector is 21.3%)</i>	22.8%
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 primary sector is 22.2%)</i>	4.7%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	12.27%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	03/06/2013
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	05/06/2013
Start date of inspection	05/12/2022

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 SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Most pupils enjoy their time at this friendly, caring and supportive school. They take pride in their school and make a significant contribution to its wonderful ethos. They are very well behaved and treat others with praiseworthy respect and courtesy. One obvious strength is the way in which staff ensure that the Welsh language and Welsh culture are a key part of the school's life and work. As a result, nearly all pupils speak and communicate confidently in Welsh in a range of various contexts. Most pupils make sound progress in developing their literacy skills in both languages, their mathematical skills and digital skills. However, overall, teachers do not provide enough purposeful opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum. As a result, many pupils do not apply their numeracy skills to the best of their ability.

The school's curriculum provides a wide range of interesting and stimulating experiences across many of the areas of learning and experience. Pupils' views are an important part of the process of planning activities and, as a result, most pupils apply themselves enthusiastically to their experiences. There is a positive environment in the classrooms and they are hard-working and purposeful learning communities. Many teachers use a suitable range of effective teaching techniques. However, there is a tendency for a few teachers to over-direct learning. This limits pupils' ability to complete their tasks independently. In addition, a few teachers do not always ensure that tasks and learning experiences are challenging enough for pupils.

The headteacher has a clear and robust vision for the school, which is based on developing pupils' well-being and Welsh language skills. She shares this vision successfully with everyone in the school community. Middle leaders support the headteacher effectively and there is a strong sense of teamwork across the school. The headteacher has a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. She is supported by governors who are supportive of the school's vision and work. However, the governing body does not play a robust enough role in the school's self-evaluation processes. As a result, it does not support the school effectively in identifying the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Recommendations

- R1 Address the health and safety issue that was raised during the inspection
- R2 Ensure an appropriate level of challenge to support pupils to develop their skills to the best of their ability
- R3 Provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R4 Ensure that members of the governing body play a full part in self-evaluation processes to support the school to identify all strengths and areas for improvement

What happens next

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

Main findings

Learning

On entry to the school, nearly all pupils' oral Welsh and social skills are lower than expected for their age. Most make sound progress by the end of their time at the school. This includes those with additional learning needs and those who are eligible for free school meals. Nearly all pupils develop their social skills highly effectively, including their ability to socialise effectively with others.

Nearly all pupils across the school develop their listening skills effectively. In the nursery and reception classes, they follow staff's instructions and respond purposefully to questions. As they move through the school, nearly all pupils concentrate for extended periods and are thoughtful when listening to each other's views and ideas maturely.

Nearly all pupils' standard of oracy is developing well in both languages. The youngest pupils use an increasing range of vocabulary purposeful in various situations. For example, pupils in the reception class choose adjectives confidently when expressing their opinion on contemporary Welsh songs. By Year 2, they converse with adults and each other in a lively manner, using Welsh of a high standard and full sentences, for example when explaining the effect of plaque on their teeth. As they move through the school, nearly all pupils' oral skills continue to develop well. In the school's upper years, they communicate fluently in both language and speak confidently in a range of contexts, for example when pupils in Years 4 and 5 argue for or against using wrapping paper at Christmas.

Nearly all pupils' reading skills develop well as they move through the school. '*Blodyn Blendio*' exercises and a reading carousel have a positive effect on the youngest pupils' reading skills. By Year 2, they read clearly, show increasing expression and pay careful attention to the range of punctuation. Most older pupils read intelligently by varying their tone of voice effectively and use techniques such as scanning and purposeful strategies to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words, for example when reading text about Anne Frank.

Many pupils make appropriate progress in developing their writing skills. The youngest pupils practise their early writing skills by using different equipment in the indoor and outdoor areas purposefully. They begin to form letters correctly and match sounds and letters successfully. By Year 3, many pupils write independently for different purposes across the curriculum effectively, for example when writing a letter to a character from their favourite book, by using adjectives effectively. By Years 5 and 6, they record their ideas effectively and show a good understanding of the features of various genres of writing in both languages. For example, they use rhetorical questions and persuasive language when writing an information pamphlet about a charity and when writing a blog about one of Wales's games in the World Cup competition.

From their starting points, most pupils make sound progress in their mathematical skills. For example, Year 1 pupils have a good understanding of numbers to 50. They recognise 2D and 3D shapes confidently when sorting everyday objects according to

their shapes and properties. By Year 2, they are able to double and halve numbers effectively by using the partition method. They recognise coins up to £1 and calculate confidently how much change they will get after buying things from the shop. As pupils move through the school, many of their number skills develop strongly. Year 6 pupils have a sound understanding of calculation methods by using the 4 operations, calculate percentages of values effectively and use co-ordinates to translate shapes in the 4 quadrants. These pupils are given some purposeful opportunities to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum, for example when creating a line graph and a bar chart to record the weather in Egypt over the course of a year. However, opportunities across the school for pupils to apply their numeracy skills regularly in a range of activities across the curriculum are limited.

Most pupils develop their information and communication technology skills effectively to support their work across the curriculum. In the school's lower years, they use a range of simple digital equipment effectively and record their work digitally in the indoor and outdoor areas confidently. For example, pupils take pictures of their completed work by using a tablet computer, before uploading it to a website to share their work with their parents. Most pupils' digital skills in the school's upper years are developing effectively. They use a wide range of programs successfully, for example by creating programs to measure fitness through coding or when using a spreadsheet to create a map to represent which countries were enemies of Britain during the Second World War.

Many pupils benefit from purposeful opportunities to develop their creative skills across the school. For example, the youngest pupils respond well and enthusiastically when undertaking physical exercise in the hall. Pupils in Year 6 have benefitted from an African drumming workshop to coincide with their theme on '*Antur yn Affrica*' ('Adventure in Africa') and have mixed colours independently to create the chilling effect of an old house to accompany their creative story on the same topic. However, the over-use of templates and rigid instructions hinder pupils' ability to expand on their art skills independently enough.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils are happy at the school. They feel safe and know whom to approach if they are worried about anything. There is a wide range of purposeful techniques to promote well-being. A good example is the effective use of well-being character, such as 'Bela Becso' and 'Poli Pryderon', and many pupils feel that adults take any concerns they may have seriously. One of the school's strong features is the way in which pupils treat each other and adults extremely respectfully and politely both inside and outside the classroom. As a result, a wonderful atmosphere permeates the school and there is a strong sense of being one big family.

Most pupils respond positively to the opportunities they are given to influence what they learn within their termly themes. Through the effective use of the planning walls in each classroom, pupils share their ideas and add questions about what they would like to discover at the beginning of a new theme. As a result, most pupils feel that adults listen to their ideas and consider them when planning learning activities for them. This is effective in ensuring that most pupils show enthusiasm and interest in their work.

Most pupils concentrate well on their work without letting other things in the classroom distract them. When they are given purposeful opportunities to do so, they show resilience when undertaking their challenges and persevere effectively when solving difficulties and completing tasks. However, the tasks that are provided for pupils are not always challenging enough and a minority of pupils do not provide regular opportunities for pupils to solve problems independently. This limits pupils' ability to make decisions for themselves and make choices about the best way to learn.

A majority of pupils take advantage of beneficial opportunities to respond to feedback on their work from staff and peers. As a result, they know what the next steps are to improve some aspects of their work. However, teachers' feedback is not always incisive enough and does not always link closely enough to the specific requirements of tasks. As a result, pupils do not pay attention to improving the actual content of their work.

Pupils on the various committees and groups undertake their roles enthusiastically. For example, the '*Ditectifs Lles*' ('Well-being Detectives') have been at the forefront of seeking the views of other pupils on how to improve the school environment. They did this by encouraging pupils across the school to complete questionnaires, before analysing them. As a result, the school has invested in an '*Ogof y Ddraig*' (the Dragon's Cave) shed, which is located on the school playground. In the shed, pupils are given time to discuss with an adult any issue that is worrying them. Pupils in the '*Cymry Cŵl*' group are very influential in promoting the Welsh language across the school, including during lunchtimes and break times. Through these opportunities, pupils develop leadership and co-operation skills effectively. They contribute purposefully to the school's priorities for improvement and national priorities.

Most pupils' understanding of eating and drinking healthily and understanding the effect of exercise on their health is developing effectively. They are enthusiastic and hard-working during physical education lessons and enjoy taking part in the variety of sports clubs that are available, for example the netball club for older pupils and the outdoor '*Mega Mwdlyd*' club for the school's youngest pupils. Many of the older pupils have a sound knowledge of online safety, for example how to set a strong password to keep their digital workplaces safe and what steps to take should a stranger contact them online.

Teaching and learning experiences

On the whole, teachers plan purposefully to ensure that nearly all pupils enjoy valuable experiences that develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Staff have a good working relationship with pupils. They foster a positive and supportive learning environment and, as a result, nearly all pupils behave well. They are polite towards each other and treat adults with respect.

The school's procedures for introducing the Curriculum for Wales are developing effectively. Teachers work together and plan purposefully to provide interesting and stimulating experiences that cover many of the areas of learning comprehensively. All members of staff are effective language role models and this has a very positive effect on most pupils' oral skills. Learning activities are effective in supporting pupils to apply their literacy and digital skills successfully across the school. For example,

within their termly themes, teachers provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to write at length for different purposes. The youngest pupils write a letter to Father Christmas noting their wishes, while older pupils write a fact file about the lives of different people in society in ancient Egypt. However, teachers do not provide enough purposeful opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum. As a result, most pupils do not make as much progress as they could in developing their numeracy skills.

Staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to be a part of the process of planning the direction of their learning. The 'Pupil's Voice' walls in each class motivate pupils to contribute their ideas to planning and what they would like to discover. As a result, most pupils take ownership of the themes and apply themselves enthusiastically to their tasks.

Many teachers plan stimulating educational visits to enrich and reinforce learning in the classroom. For example, as part of the theme on Wales in the Tudor Period, pupils from Years 3 and 4 visit the local manor house in Llancaiach Fawr. Through this visit, they are given rich opportunities to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the lives of people during this period. Teachers provide exciting opportunities for pupils to work with local artists and national poets, for example by creating a mural on the side of a local public house. The mural includes a poem composed by the pupils in the local dialect.

The school's youngest pupils benefit from purposeful experiences in the school's outdoor areas. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 take advantage of purposeful opportunities to develop their oracy and numeracy skills by measuring and discussing their height in the surgery that is located in the shed. However, opportunities for the school's older pupils to access the outdoor areas to reinforce learning are limited.

Teaching is good in many classes. Where it is at its best, teachers' presentations are lively and stimulating and engage most pupils' interest. Teachers use a range of probing questioning methods, which are effective in recalling previous learning and guide the direction of learning purposefully. They model good pieces of work, which stimulate purposeful discussions among the pupils to set incisive and specific success criteria for learning tasks. However, in the few sessions where teaching is not as effective, adults over-direct learning and the level of challenge is not always suitable to meet the needs of all pupils.

Many teachers provide purposeful feedback that supports pupils to reflect on their tasks and improve their work confidently. However, feedback is not always specific enough to the learning activities. As a result, a minority of pupils do not give attention to improving the most important aspects of their work.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring and inclusive community that promotes good behaviour, courtesy and respect for all pupils. There is a close and friendly working relationship between staff and pupils and this is reflected in the positive attitudes of nearly all pupils towards all of the school's life and work.

The school encourages pupils to undertake leadership roles to promote a safe and happy environment. For example, pupils on the school council have produced a bullying policy and this has been fundamental in promoting good behaviour among nearly all pupils. Appropriate opportunities are provided for pupils to take part in performances and events. For example, pupils are given valuable opportunities to compete in the Rhondda Eisteddfod and various sports competitions. These experiences are effective in developing many pupils' self-confidence and their ability to work together as a team.

Through a good range of purposeful opportunities, the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully. In whole school assemblies, staff discuss the school's important values regularly and how to be good citizens in society. They discuss children's rights often, in addition to the need to treat everyone with respect. Pupils enjoy taking part in national occasions, for example by raising money for the Children in Need charity and going to school in their pyjamas as part of the campaign. In the school's older years, teachers provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of sustainability, for example by creating a short film to show how the school is working to reduce its carbon footprint.

The school places a firm focus on supporting pupils' well-being, including their emotional needs and mental health. Staff ensure that pupils have effective access to a range of appropriate programmes that help them to deal with their feelings and emotions. A highly effective technique that is used daily by pupils to share their feelings and worries is the well-being register. Through this, pupils succeed in responding to any pupils' worries sensitively at the beginning of the school day. The school works well with various agencies, where necessary, to try to improve the behaviour and social difficulties of a very few pupils.

The school provides purposeful support for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). They work effectively with a wide range of external agencies to achieve this. The school makes effective use of different purposeful interventions that are successful in ensuring that nearly all pupils with ALN make good progress in their skills over time. Teachers and assistants work together diligently to track pupils' progress regularly. They ensure that all pupils have specific targets that are reviewed and evaluated regularly. They include parents purposefully in discussions about their children's progress. By holding support sessions for parents within the school, staff provide them with beneficial training. This is effective in enabling parents to support the development of their children's literacy skills at home. Through effective co-operation, most pupils with ALN make sound progress over time.

Staff have a strong awareness of safeguarding processes and leaders respond appropriately to any individual cases and work effectively with other agencies, where appropriate. The school has robust procedures to respond to any cases of bullying. Staff keep a record of any instances, monitor them regularly and hold discussions with pupils and parents. During the inspection, a health and safety concern was brought to the attention of leaders.

The school's procedures for ensuring regular attendance by pupils are robust. Staff keep appropriate records of absences and contact parents in a timely manner to

discuss any concerns about their children's attendance. External agencies are used effectively to support this.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision that is based on developing pupils' well-being in an inclusive and friendly environment. She is supported effectively by middle leaders who share this vision successfully with pupils, staff, governors and parents. There is a strong emphasis on developing the Welsh language and Welsh culture among pupils. This has a very positive effect on pupils' understanding and use of the Welsh language across the school.

Middle leaders are effective in supporting the headteacher and ensuring that there is a strong sense of teamwork across the school. They have an appropriate understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are responsible for specific aspects of the school's work and contribute purposefully to ensuring that nearly all pupils, including those with additional needs and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, make sound progress in their skills over time. There are robust plans in place to develop pupils' Welsh oracy, reading and writing skills. However, there is not enough emphasis on developing pupils' numeracy skills regularly and purposefully across the school.

Leaders create a positive culture and ethos to promote and support the professional learning of all staff. All members of staff are given regular opportunities to attend courses and training that are linked directly to their individual needs and the school's strategic priorities. They share ideas and best practice with each other purposefully and this contributes strongly to the school's ethos as a learning organisation. The headteacher has high expectations of her own performance and that of staff. All members of staff have improvement targets that link closely with the improvement plan and their professional development priorities. Progress against these is evaluated on a termly basis and the headteacher monitors teachers' performance regularly. The headteacher challenges the school's performance regularly and looks at ways to improve continuously. As a result, the school has a record of consistent improvement over time.

The headteacher and middle leaders have a sound understanding of the school's main strengths and areas for improvement. They use a range of purposeful activities to evaluate standards and teaching, including monitoring teachers' plans and scrutinising pupils' books. Recently, the headteacher has resumed more formal lesson observations. This has been effective in identifying the need to improve some specific aspects of pupils' standards, including the writing skills of a minority of pupils across the school. However, although leaders have a comprehensive picture of the quality of particular aspects of teaching, for example the need to ensure an appropriate level of challenge for pupils, elements of provision have not yet improved sufficiently.

The governing body receives appropriate reports from the headteacher on a termly basis, which focus on progress against the priorities in the improvement plan. Within their termly meetings, they challenge some elements of the report by asking purposeful questions that are linked to pupils' standards and provision to support them to make progress in their skills. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, the

governing body has not participated robustly enough in the school's self-evaluation processes. As a result, they do not have a comprehensive enough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Leaders ensure that the culture of safeguarding pupils has a prominent place in the school. All members of staff have a sound understanding of safeguarding procedures. The governing body ensures that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. For example, pupils are encouraged to eat fruit and drink water during the day.

The school's leaders foster a productive relationship with families and the school's wider community to improve the opportunities for all pupils in life. The school has effective lines of communication with them so that it is able to raise any issues that may affect their children's learning and well-being.

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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