



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

**A report on**

**Ysgol Gynradd Pentrecelyn**

**Pentrecelyn  
Ruthin  
LL15 2HG**

**Date of inspection: February 2023**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh.**

## About Ysgol Gynradd Pentrecelyn

Name of provider	Ysgol Gynradd Pentrecelyn
Local authority	Denbighshire County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	31
Pupils of statutory school age	26
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	
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 23.0%)</i>	0.0%
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 16.1%)</i>	*
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	73.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	03/11/2014
Start date of inspection	28/02/2023

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](http://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

Ysgol Pentrecelyn is a homely, happy school where pupils and adults work together effectively. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are courteous and kind towards each other and towards visitors and staff. Many pupils benefit from daily engagement with pupils from the other classes, for example when eating their lunch together and during activities in the forest. The school has a beneficial range of partnerships both locally and further afield and this enriches pupils' learning experiences successfully. Nearly all pupils make sound progress over time.

The school is developing an engaging curriculum that focuses on its locality, while also looking at the area's relationship with Wales and the wider world. From the outset, pupils benefit from engaging and challenging learning activities that allow them to gain independence and learn to discuss and work with their peers. Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy, literacy and digital skills through interesting themes that often focus on the local agricultural community. Pupils engage enthusiastically in various activities and challenges.

Pupils have sound oral and reading skills and they talk naturally with their friends, using rich vocabulary. Most pupils demonstrate effective numeracy skills. Most are able to use digital equipment maturely for different purposes. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills have not been developed fully and the level of challenge is not always consistent in a few activities.

The headteacher and dedicated team of teachers and support staff work together effectively to support and develop provision. They provide different interventions to support pupils' well-being and confidence. They know the pupils very well and plan for them in detail. The governing body operates successfully as a critical friend to the school and works closely with the headteacher and the team.

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Expand opportunities for older pupils to write at length in different contexts
- R2 Ensure that learning opportunities challenge pupils to develop their skills to a high standard

## **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, most pupils' skills are similar to what is expected for their age and they make sound progress over time. Most recall previous learning successfully in different contexts. The youngest children's fine motor skills and physical skills are developing well through a rich range of activities and play opportunities. For example, they develop balance and physical strength by building bridges and crossing them carefully. Many pupils in the foundation learning class peel vegetables and chop them carefully when preparing soup to be served from the fire in the forest school.

Many pupils in the foundation learning class talk confidently and correctly with their friends, for example when discussing the best place to plant potatoes in the school garden. They suggest that planting potatoes in a tyre filled with soil would be a good idea. Many older pupils listen attentively to adults and to each other during activities. They are keen to ask questions and give mature answers. For example, they explain how they illuminated the bulb by turning the blades on the windmill. Most children speak polished and natural Welsh, including those who do not come from Welsh-speaking homes. They respond maturely to questions and give good consideration to their responses. For example, they discuss the reasons why the Welsh people emigrated to Patagonia in 1865 and refer to the effect of the treachery of the blue books on the Welsh people's desire to emigrate to the colony.

The youngest pupils recognise an increasing number of letters and are beginning to build familiar words. Reception pupils read with increasing confidence and Year 1 and 2 pupils read more extensive pieces and show good understanding. Many pupils in the foundation learning class enjoy reading parts of a story about a super potato as part of their theme work on Heroes. They explain that the pea is the villain in the story and use visual cues to re-tell the story. Most older pupils read confidently in line with their age and ability in Welsh and English. Pupils who receive support make beneficial progress in their reading skills and develop confidence in interpreting texts. The oldest pupils gather information confidently and use it to help them with their work.

Many young pupils write interesting factual pieces that demonstrate their understanding of different bones in the body, from the smallest to the largest. They work in groups to create a script about the story of St Dwynwen and their work demonstrates sound simple punctuation and interesting vocabulary. Many of the oldest pupils write with an appropriate level of accuracy in a variety of contexts. For example, they create a poignant monologue about the character Twm bach on his journey to South America. However, the confidence of a few older pupils to write in a variety of extended forms has not developed fully.

Most pupils' numeracy skills are developing well. The youngest pupils develop an awareness of the meaning of numbers at an early stage and are beginning to use them in different contexts. For example, nursery pupils count naturally when fetching three potatoes and two carrots from the shelf and selling them to their friends, using money from the till in the shop. Foundation learning pupils develop an awareness of symmetry by creating a symmetrical picture with twigs, pinecones and stones in the

forest. Most pupils in the older children's class show sound numeracy skills. They apply their skills to different engaging contexts. For example, they learn about costs and profit as part of their 'Coffi Celyn' enterprise work. They discuss fractions appropriately when discussing fields and stock and use a database confidently to find information about passengers on the Mimosa in 1865. They consider the names of the passengers, their age and the location of their homes in Wales and create accurate graphs of the data.

Most pupils have sound skills when using digital equipment and software. Many of the school's young pupils use QR codes to select activities with an appropriate level of challenge and use the oral message that explains the details of the task. Pupils in the older class work together highly effectively to create excellent presentations that explain different Welsh traditions, such as the history of the Mari Lwyd on New Year's Day. Their work demonstrates detailed research, effective scripting and polished performances and editing. The final production is of a high standard.

Most pupils' co-operation and problem-solving skills are developing well. For example, older pupils persevere diligently when trying to ensure that the blades of the windmill turn to illuminate the bulb in their model. Many children create highly effective paintings of the church on Llanddwyn Island, which displays the different colours at sunset. Pupils sing harmoniously during their presentations for the Urdd Eisteddfod and during their St David's Day celebrations and school assemblies.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Nearly all pupils are happy, polite and friendly. They take pride in their school and the agricultural community of which they are an integral part. They appreciate the rich experiences provided by the school. Pupils feel safe at school and are confident that staff treat them fairly at all times. Pupils have a positive attitude towards the school and show pride when talking about their work. They discuss their activities confidently with visitors. For example, they enjoy discussing their enterprise work in relation to the Coffi Celyn enterprise.

Pupils listen to presentations maturely, concentrate for extended periods and commit to completing their tasks successfully. They develop confidence when discussing with their peers and relate tasks that they have undertaken previously to their current work. For example, they discuss their work about the continent of South America when learning about Patagonia.

Across the school, pupils have a sound knowledge of how to stay safe online. An example of this is the way in which they design T-shirts to draw attention to the importance of online safety. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They treat their fellow pupils with genuine kindness and consider their needs and feelings. Their behaviour during collective assemblies is exceptional, with the school's older pupils taking care of the younger pupils. They are polite towards adults and visitors and treat each other respectfully, for example when considering other pupils' views in the St David's Day assembly.

Across the school, pupils undertake their tasks conscientiously and respond positively to guidance from adults. They have an interest in all aspects of their work and apply themselves fully to their tasks. Nearly all pupils are ready to learn at the

beginning of sessions and move between sessions quickly and without fuss. Many support each other and work successfully in pairs and groups within the classes. For example, in the foundation learning class, groups of pupils work independently for extended periods when trying to balance pieces of vegetables and a number of cubes. From an early age, they try new and more challenging tasks and respond positively to feedback on how to improve their work. Pupils are aware of the importance of taking care of their emotional well-being and respond maturely to opportunities to discuss their feelings. They develop valuable emotional resilience through opportunities to think about what is worrying them, including throwing the worry like a stick into the fire in the forest school.

Pupils develop their physical skills well and enjoy their work outdoors. They are given interesting opportunities to develop their physical skills during physical education lessons and break times. A number of the older pupils also take advantage of opportunities to represent local sports clubs.

Many pupils show pride in their responsibilities as part of the pupils' cabinet and take their roles seriously. The pupil's voice is clear and robust and is an asset to the school. In the cabinet's view, the school's main strengths are the rich opportunities they are given, in addition to valuable extra-curricular experiences. They are proud of the fact that everyone knows each other and that the oldest pupils are given opportunities to engage with the youngest pupils on a daily basis. In their opinion, this creates a close-knit, family unit where everyone takes care of each other. The Welsh Language Charter is led by two representatives of the cabinet. They promote the Welsh language and encourage pupils to celebrate their Welshness by using the Welsh language in all aspects of school life. Pupils develop as ethical citizens by developing their awareness of sustainability. For example, at the top of the school, they learn about the importance of creating renewable electricity and the importance of recycling.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

The school's curriculum provides a rich range of learning experiences for pupils of all ages. Leaders and teachers develop a balanced curriculum that is based on the local area and reflects pupils' interests and aspirations successfully. Leaders and teachers use pupils' interests to plan themes that interest them and provide a range of engaging experiences. Teachers share responsibility for the areas of learning and experience of the Curriculum for Wales and share practices and expertise regularly. A notable example of this is the work on developing pupils' numeracy skills in agricultural contexts.

Teachers respond effectively to the needs of different pupils and provide opportunities for them to choose the level of challenge in activities. As a result, many pupils discuss their work maturely and confidently and express an opinion about what they learn. A good example of this is the use of different challenges in the foundation learning class, where pupils are given opportunities to select activities and check the expectations for the task by listening to instructions that have been recorded by adults. This fosters pupils' independence successfully. At the top of the school, teachers provide challenges for pupils at different stages of development and pupils respond maturely to their tasks. However, in a few activities, mainly with the oldest

pupils, the level of challenge does not always allow all pupils to develop their skills to a high standard.

On entry to the school, teachers implement initial assessments that set a baseline and help teachers to plan the next steps for pupils. The school has rigorous assessment procedures. Staff hold regular progress meetings, which are an opportunity for them to contribute to ensuring that all individuals receive support and challenge, as required. Teachers provide learning experiences that hold pupils' interest and raise their aspirations for their careers and the world of work. A notable example of this is the STEAM work (science, technology, engineering, agriculture, mathematics), which provides opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in real-life contexts.

Provision to develop pupils' Welsh and English is effective. They are given an appropriate range of opportunities to develop their numeracy skills in different interesting and practical contexts. There are very extensive and effective opportunities for them to foster independence by using digital equipment to complete extended tasks. However, opportunities for pupils in the older class to develop their extended writing skills have not been developed in full.

Across the school, there is a close and fond relationship between staff and pupils. This supports pupils' well-being successfully. Teachers encourage a positive mindset among pupils and emphasise the importance of challenging themselves and not being afraid to fail sometimes. All staff ask challenging questions skilfully, for example when discussing how to ensure that plants thrive in the outdoor area.

Teachers give pupils useful oral feedback during their learning activities, alongside developmental comments that relate specifically to the success criteria set for the task. They provide opportunities for children to respond to their own work and that of their peers. These activities are well established in both classes.

The classrooms and the outdoor area are used effectively to develop pupils' curiosity; for example, the 'Cwt Celyn', where pupils investigate, play and perform. The experiences that pupils receive in the forest school develop their confidence and co-operation skills successfully.

There is a close and supportive relationship between the school and parents and carers. Staff hold regular meetings and share useful reports to ensure that parents and carers have up to date information about their children's progress.

### **Care, support and guidance**

A strong sense of Welshness and pride in the language provide a foundation for all of the school's work. The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about their community and area. For example, when learning about the history of Ysgol Pentrecelyn, the daughter of a former headteacher was invited to visit the school to discuss her experience of living in the schoolhouse when she was a child.

The wealth of learning areas both inside and outside the building supports pupils' well-being successfully. Areas such as the forest school, the garden and Cwt Celyn, along with the caring ethos, lay firm foundations for learning. The headteacher and



teachers have a thorough knowledge of the needs of all pupils. They place a strong emphasis on offering provision that meets pupils' individual needs. All pupils have a comprehensive profile that reflects their interests and needs. Staff consider pupils' emotional well-being by recording developments in a narrative that is reviewed each term. The use of the learning log and one-to-one sessions is also valuable in supporting pupils through challenging times.

Staff are responding to the recent challenging period and its effect on pupils through beneficial interventions and this is having a very positive influence on pupils' well-being. An example of this is the way arrangements were made for a local drama company to visit the school to hold weekly sessions to raise pupils' confidence. The '*Cais am Air*' and '*Tisho Sgwrs*' provision provide an opportunity for pupils to express their concerns sensitively and safely. A member of staff has been identified as the contact for pupils and this has a positive effect on their well-being. Staff work successfully with a number of agencies, such as the family liaison service and the speech and language service. This contributes effectively towards ensuring strong support for pupils.

Because of the nature of the school, all pupils are given valuable opportunities to express their views about decisions on the work of the school. This is done by contributing in the classroom, in assemblies and as part of the cabinet. Members of the cabinet have specific roles, for example in encouraging the use of the Welsh language. The eco members considered the distance that their morning food travelled to reach the school and decided to appoint a local provider to supply it. Goods now come from a local farm and pupils are proud that this has reduced their carbon footprint.

The school also places great value on equality, which helps pupils to understand issues relating to inclusion and the rights of others. An example of this is the way in which the cabinet has produced an equality charter, which is visible across the school. This charter reminds them of their duty to their fellow human beings. This ensures that pupils are given sound opportunities to appreciate the difference between right and wrong, in addition to ensuring the rights of others. The school provides good support to all pupils, whatever their background. Staff promote a culture of safeguarding effectively through detailed procedures that are known to everyone.

The school provides robustly to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural attitudes. The link between the school and Makhai Primary School in Uganda is a valuable means of developing pupils' understanding of respect and empathy. Assemblies are held collectively and in the classrooms regularly. A service was held at Pentrecelyn Chapel to collect donations for the local food bank. The eldest pupils took the food produce to the local centre in Ruthin. This helped to develop pupils' awareness of the importance of helping others. The lunch arrangements enable adults and all of the school's pupils to eat at the same time. This is a means of enriching the family element that is such a significant feature of the school.

The school sets high expectations in terms of pupils' behaviour and, as a result, pupils behave extremely politely and kindly towards each other, staff and visitors. This sense of belonging means that pupils are keen to come to school each day and has a positive influence on attendance over time. A strong sense of safeguarding is

embedded in all aspects of the school's work. Staff have a sound understanding of all procedures and receive appropriate training regularly.

The school provides many opportunities that encourage pupils to take part in the arts and in sports and leisure. For example, there are numerous opportunities for them to take part in sports tournaments, performances and to compete in the Urdd Eisteddfod. There are effective and well-considered transition arrangements between the primary and secondary schools through regular visits and opportunities for pupils to get to know other pupils locally.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher sets a robust and clear direction for the school. His vision is based on the school motto, '*dysgu, mwynhau a chwarae yn Gymraeg*' ('learn, enjoy and play in Welsh'). All staff work together successfully to realise this vision and its effect can be seen on pupils' development, progress and well-being. Parents and carers also work closely with the school to promote the children's development and confidence.

A strong sense of belonging has been established within the school. The enthusiastic team of teachers and support staff work together effectively to ensure rich provision in a local and Welsh context. Pupils' well-being is at the heart of all of their work and staff and pupils work together happily. The headteacher facilitates effective co-operation with all the school's stakeholders and looks for rich and alternative ways of igniting the pupils' thinking and imagination.

Members of the governing body support the school's strategic development successfully. They hold full meetings each term and various committees are also held. Committees report back to the full meeting to receive information and finalise decisions. Through their detailed work, they operate effectively as a critical friend to the school. They support the headteacher with the work of developing partnerships to develop provision at Pentrecelyn.

Governors are responsible for specific aspects and visit the school to discuss with staff, for example when looking at elements such as safety or professional learning. They have thorough knowledge of recent developments with the Curriculum for Wales and of the expectations of additional learning needs reform and their effect on the school. Governors hold learning walks with the headteacher or key staff and scrutinise pupils' work and discuss developments in terms of teaching and planning. For example, governors conducted a learning walk that focused on digital activities with an officer from the regional consortium. As a result of this work, a decision was made to invest in computer equipment for all pupils. The effect of this can be seen on pupils' progress. Governors have a sound awareness of the importance of promoting a culture of healthy eating and drinking among pupils.

Leaders ensure that all of the school's staff contribute to self-evaluation procedures through activities such as progress meetings, in which they scrutinise pupils' development and different aspects of provision. This work is based on a logic model approach, which focuses appropriately on developing provision to maintain and improve standards continuously. The procedures summarise suitable actions and give detailed attention to evaluating the impact of the action.

Teachers undertake numerous responsibilities and share and work together regularly and flexibly. They play a full part in the process of evaluating and developing the school's curriculum. This can be seen in particular in the way in which they provide rich opportunities for pupils to take part in outdoor activities and enjoy experiences that arise from local contexts.

Plans for professional learning are effective. A member of staff is part of the local digital cluster, which focuses on sharing expertise and practices in the digital competence framework. This has been of great benefit to the school and has had a positive effect on provision for information and communication technology and on pupils' confidence. The headteacher and governors support staff members to train in specific areas which, in turn, expands the learning experiences that they provide for pupils. This has led to the development of the forest school area, expanding provision for pupils outdoors.

The school's improvement priorities contribute to staff performance management objectives. One of the school's strengths is that teachers share responsibilities by discussing plans to develop the curriculum jointly. Teachers also work closely with officers from the regional consortium, for example when scrutinising teaching methods. This has led to producing a robust and effective vision for implementing the curriculum and adapting teaching methods to encourage pupils' independence.

## 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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