



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

**A report on**

**Ysgol Cymerau**

**Ffordd Mela  
Pwllheli  
LL53 5AR**

**Date of inspection: April 2023**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh**

## About Ysgol Cymerau

Name of provider	Ysgol Cymerau
Local authority	Cyngor Gwynedd
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	293
Pupils of statutory school age	232
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	33
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>	16.7%
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>	23.7%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	53.4%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	4.3%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2020
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	04/01/2016
Start date of inspection	25/04/2023

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](https://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 Cymerau is a happy and inclusive school that provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to learn about their area, their culture and their heritage in addition to the wider world. Through the headteacher's robust leadership, staff and members of the governing body are committed to creating a stimulating and beneficial learning environment for pupils. Across the school, most pupils behave very well and demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. They take great pride in their school and support each other successfully. As a result, most pupils make sound progress in their learning during their time at the school.

Staff have a productive working relationship with pupils and encourage them to give of their best. They create an attractive and stimulating learning environment which encourages pupils to engage in a good range of beneficial learning and play experiences. In the best practice, pupils take ownership of their learning and develop their independent learning skills successfully. However, overall, staff have a tendency to over-direct learning which, in turn, hinders pupils' ability to make independent choices and take responsibility for their learning. Most pupils respond well to oral feedback, although opportunities for them to improve their own work following written feedback from teachers are limited.

The headteacher and leaders prioritise the well-being of staff and pupils and support them well. They share their vision and the school's values successfully with stakeholders, which sets a purposeful strategic direction for them. Members of the governing body make a valuable contribution to the school's success. Although leaders have a suitable understanding of their school, self-evaluation processes are not incisive enough to influence important aspects of provision and pupils' standards effectively enough.

## Recommendations

- R1 Refine self-evaluation processes to ensure improvements in provision and progress in pupils' skills
- R2 Ensure that teaching provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills effectively
- R3 Improve opportunities for pupils to respond to feedback to improve their work and take more responsibility for their learning

## 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 the use of the local area to enrich the curriculum and pupils' Welshness, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

## Main findings

### Learning

On entry to the school, most pupils' skills correspond to what is expected for their stage of development. They make sound progress over time, including those with additional learning needs (ALN). The play and learning skills of the youngest pupils become well-established on entry to the nursery class. They listen attentively and consider their friends' feelings successfully. Most develop their physical skills robustly through play, for example when throwing food into the 'Very Hungry Caterpillar's' mouth.

Most pupils in the foundation learning classes listen well to each other and adults. They are polite when following instructions and share ideas with others sensibly. Most of the oldest pupils speak Welsh completely naturally, correctly and with increasing confidence. As a result, they communicate with each other successfully in various contexts.

Most Year 2 pupils read a range of texts with a good level of accuracy. They have a good awareness of punctuation and explain the importance of a comma and full stop correctly when reading aloud. They demonstrate a good range of reading techniques to build multisyllabic words successfully. At the top of the school, most pupils read confidently in different contexts. Many pupils in Years 5 and 6 discuss the content of their books maturely and explain which authors appeal to them and attract them to enjoy reading.

Most of the youngest pupils develop their early writing skills successfully by experimenting and making marks with various resources. As they move through the foundation learning classes, they build on their writing skills effectively in a rich range of genres. For example, pupils in the reception class and Year 1 use their skills skilfully when writing a song for the Wizard's eisteddfod. A few more able pupils in Year 2 also create extended stories by using the past tense of the verb maturely, with a few beginning to use simple rhetorical questions to enrich their work highly effectively.

Most pupils in Years 3 to 6 write skilfully in a wide range of creative and factual genres. They demonstrate sound spelling skills in both languages and use a good range of punctuation to create tension to have an effect on the reader. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 write a script that conveys the effect of the flooding of the Tryweryn Valley on the community of Capel Celyn by using a good range of rich vocabulary and effective punctuation.

Most foundation learning pupils develop sound numeracy skills in a good range of practical learning and play experiences. They have a good understanding of number work and use their knowledge regularly to solve problems, for example when estimating the length of different equipment in the classroom, then comparing them

with the correct standard measurement. Many measure by using centimetres and millimetres with increasing accuracy and recognise right angles in regular shapes.

Most pupils at the top of the school develop their mathematics and numeracy skills strongly. They discover the area and perimeter of shapes confidently and a few more able pupils discover the area of more complex composite shapes correctly. Many pupils apply their skills in different contexts successfully. For example, they solve problems skilfully while researching the healthiest ingredients to create a nutritious breakfast for a specific cost.

Most pupils' digital skills are sound. They use a wide range of equipment confidently to support them with their work. For example, Year 2 pupils use apps confidently to place pictures of their faces on characters from Rala Rwdins stories. They paint the background digitally to create highly effective finished pictures. Many pupils at the top of the school use equipment and software skilfully, for example when creating and editing useful fitness videos to promote exercise. In Years 5 and 6, pupils use their numeracy and digital skills successfully to solve real life problems, for example by building and programming a tracker to measure how many steps a person will walk in a specific time.

Most pupils demonstrate sound creative skills. Pupils in the reception class and Year 1 compose songs about the Dewin Dwl and show a good awareness of pitch and beat. Across the school, pupils create artwork effectively by emulating the style of famous local artists. The oldest pupils also develop their creative skills skilfully while working with pupils across the school to create impressive and colourful pictures of the planets.

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

Most pupils behave very well and are extremely polite towards each other and adults. They take great pride in the school and feel that staff listen to them and that they are valued and treated fairly. Pupils play an active part in supporting the school's familial and friendly environment, which contributes robustly to developing the emotional well-being of their peers. For example, the school's oldest pupils protect and support the well-being of the youngest pupils through their '*Ffrindiau Ffeind*' scheme.

Most pupils are confident when discussing the importance of eating and drinking healthily and understand the effect of exercise on them. Many pupils travel to school on foot or by bicycle with the '*bws beics*' ('bike bus'), which has a positive effect on their fitness and their awareness of the importance of using sustainable travel to reduce the effect of pollution on the environment.

Across the school, most pupils are aware of the importance of taking care of their emotional well-being and take advantage of opportunities to discuss their feelings. For example, they talk naturally for periods on a daily basis to discuss 'today's feelings' and express their emotions or talk about any concerns in a sensitive manner. Nearly all pupils feel safe at school and are aware that staff are available to discuss or share advice and support if they have any concerns. Most have a good knowledge of how to stay safe online by learning in beneficial activities that remind them of the rules. For example, pupils deepen their understanding by creating a series of safety rules while designing posters for a competition to share with others both inside and outside the school.

Members of the school councils take their role seriously and are beginning to make a valuable contribution to the school's work. The oldest pupils listen effectively to the contributions of their peers when making decisions, which includes supporting the work of the eco council to reduce the use of water across the school, for example. The good range of different councils also support important aspects of the school's life and work, including promoting pupils' health and well-being through the work of the cycling group and supporting digital skills through the work of the 'tech team'. This makes a valuable contribution to the pupils' sense of the importance and influence of their contribution to school life.

Across the school, nearly all pupils show positive attitudes to learning. Most undertake their tasks conscientiously and concentrate well for specific periods. They respect the contributions of their peers and interact politely with each other during learning and play sessions, for example as the youngest pupils role-play in 'Caffi Largo' and sell goods and handle money successfully. Most apply themselves to their tasks enthusiastically and persevere when responding to challenges. In the best practice, pupils work together and support each other effectively to solve problems fairly independently.

Most pupils discuss their previous work and learning confidently. They respond well to oral feedback from teachers and assistants to improve their work. In the best practice, the oldest pupils re-visit their work appropriately to improve the content following written feedback. However, staff do not always use this method robustly enough across the school to ensure that pupils respond regularly enough to written feedback.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

The principles of the Curriculum for Wales have been introduced firmly and are at the heart of the leaders' vision. They establish beneficial planning arrangements that are based on areas of learning and experience. This ensures that pupils, teachers and assistants provide a good range of learning experiences that contribute well to developing pupils' skills and knowledge. The school curriculum recognises the importance of equal access for all and promotes the successes of women in society effectively.

Teachers and assistants provide an effective range of activities across the curriculum which respond successfully to pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills. A strong feature of provision is the use of the local area as a stimulus for termly themes, with an emphasis on learning about the geography, heritage and culture of Pwllheli and the Llŷn Peninsula. For example, teachers organise beneficial visits for pupils to the places after which their classes are named, for example 'Porth Neigwl', 'Porthdinllaen' and 'Nant Gwrtheyrn', and invite local experts to discuss the background and history of the area. This deepens pupils' interest and knowledge of their '*cynefin*' successfully. The oldest pupils have also benefitted greatly from work on creating a new shanty based on the poem Largo by the poet Cynan and setting it to a traditional tune. They develop research skills and develop an awareness of the importance of appreciating the history of their area and maintaining and recalling it skilfully.

Foundation learning principles have been established appropriately and a range of beneficial experiences are provided for pupils in the learning and play areas both

inside and outside the classroom. These experiences respond suitably to pupils' interests and, as a result, most develop their skills successfully. However, overall, staff have a tendency to over-direct learning at times which, in turn, hinders opportunities for pupils to make decisions and develop independent learning skills. On the whole, teachers in Years 3 to 6 plan a good range of beneficial learning experiences that provide an appropriate challenge for the range of ability across the classes. At the top of the school, teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to make choices about the challenges they would like to complete and, as a result, they gain confidence and resilience when making decisions about their learning. However, this practice has not been developed fully across the school.

Most teachers use a good range of teaching methods and resources to spark pupils' interest and develop their skills. They make their classes stimulating environments where pupils can develop their skills successfully. Without exception, teachers and assistants have a productive working relationship with pupils. They know their pupils well and respond appropriately to their needs, particularly when stretching more able pupils. Teachers use observations and knowledge about progress in pupils' skills to plan beneficial learning and play experiences for them.

Across the school, teachers and assistants question pupils skilfully to develop their skills and understanding. They speak polished Welsh and encourage and support pupils to speak the language correctly and regularly, particularly in the youngest classes. Most teachers and assistants provide beneficial oral feedback to encourage pupils to consider what they are doing well and how to improve their work. However, following written feedback, teachers do not always ensure suitable opportunities for pupils to improve their work independently or to evaluate their own work and that of their peers regularly enough.

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

The school is a caring and happy community that promotes good behaviour and courtesy from all pupils. All staff are committed to ensuring that values and pupils' emotional well-being are key to their work. Positive relationships between staff and pupils are clear across the whole school, which contributes effectively to their happiness and well-being. This is reflected in the positive attitudes of nearly all pupils towards the school's life and work. The effective use of resources, such as provision for nurture groups, also reflects the school's positive and inclusive ethos and the commitment of staff to supporting the emotional and social well-being needs of all pupils.

The school has robust processes in place which have a positive effect on pupils with ALN. The co-ordinator fulfils her role well and supports teachers to create individual plans for pupils who receive additional support. They set beneficial personal targets for these pupils and evaluate progress regularly to identify the next steps in their learning. As a result, most pupils make good progress against their personal targets.

Teachers and assistants work effectively with a variety of external agencies to receive specialist guidance and advice to support pupils who receive additional support. For example, they work closely with the local authority's speech and language specialist to receive training and advice on how to support pupils with speech impediments. Teachers also adapt teaching and learning approaches effectively to respond to pupils' individual needs, for example by recording and

presenting their work electronically by using a voice note to ensure that they have full access to the curriculum. This ensures that provision meets pupils' needs effectively and ensures that they are included in all aspects of school life.

Teachers provide a variety of valuable experiences to promote pupils' moral, spiritual and cultural development. They ensure beneficial opportunities for pupils to reflect on current affairs and different religions and cultures in classroom activities. For example, pupils have researched the flags of countries and the world's key beliefs as part of their work on the football World Cup. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to express their opinions on current affairs and influence the work of the class by following lines of enquiry, where necessary, for example by discovering more about the effect of geology and earthquakes in Turkey. Pupils are also given beneficial opportunities to discuss their rights and develop their understanding of the rights of the child around the world. This includes learning about the importance of equal rights and the importance of challenging stereotypes; for example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 have learned about this through their work on the theme '*Genod Gwych a Bechgyn Bendigedig*', studying the lives of famous Welsh people, for example by learning about a famous adventurer, elite athlete and television presenter as one of Wales's cool women.

Pupils take advantage of extremely beneficial opportunities to celebrate their Welshness and to feel that they belong to the local community. The close links with the local area ensure that pupils play an important role in the life of the area, for example by taking part in a concert to welcome the National Eisteddfod. They are also given valuable opportunities to develop their creative skills by visiting and working with famous local artists to create their own artwork. Teachers also organise special occasions for pupils to support local and national charities, which has a positive effect on their understanding of the importance of helping others. Staff provide a wide range of pupil's voice groups, which have a positive effect on the school's work.

The school has a strong and consistent culture of safeguarding and arrangements for monitoring and promoting pupils' punctuality and attendance are sound. Beneficial opportunities are provided for pupils to learn how to stay safe online, which has a positive effect on their practice and understanding.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher has established a positive team ethos across the school and ensures that staff are fully committed to supporting each other and promoting pupils' learning and well-being. They have worked successfully with partners to create a clear vision that is reflected effectively through the motto '*Lle daw dwy afon yn un lli*' and the school's values. The values of respect, co-operation, effort and perseverance, in addition to pride in their Welshness and their area, derive from the shared aspirations of leaders, staff and pupils. This lays a firm foundation for all of the school's work and reflects the commitment of the headteacher, staff and governors to supporting and responding fully to the needs of all pupils.

The headteacher and leaders set high expectations for staff, pupils and themselves. They prioritise the well-being of staff and pupils and ensure that they receive purposeful support, where necessary. Leaders allocate roles and responsibilities successfully, which ensures that staff are committed to maintaining and improving



the quality of provision and pupils' standards across the school. They have established beneficial relationships with parents, which contribute well to their ability to support their children at home. For example, staff in the youngest classes communicate with parents regularly by using a beneficial app. The school has robust arrangements in place to ensure that there is an opportunity for parents to discuss any issues with leaders and teachers. As a result, they respond promptly to any issues that need attention.

Leaders use a range of self-evaluation arrangements appropriately, which include scrutiny of books, seeking pupils' views and observing teaching and learning through learning walks. This ensures that leaders identify strengths and areas for improvement appropriately. In the best practice, leaders and co-ordinators of areas of learning and experience undertake a good range of monitoring activities to identify needs and plan for improvement, for example to improve pupils' digital skills. In this case, the co-ordinator has succeeded in evaluating provision and pupils' initial standards, checking the professional development needs of staff, planning actions and monitoring them regularly. As a result, the digital skills of pupils across the school show strong progress. However, overall, whole-school self-evaluation and planning for improvement processes are not incisive or effective enough to address in full aspects of provision that are in need of improvement.

The school's governors know the school well. Members of the governing body support leaders and staff strongly and have begun to re-visit the school to undertake a few monitoring activities. They are responsible for specific aspects of the current priorities in the improvement plan, which enables them to support the school and discharge their duties appropriately. As a result, they play a proactive role in the school's life and work and show an appropriate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. The governing body supports the culture of safeguarding successfully and ensures that the school has comprehensive arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

The school provides beneficial opportunities for staff to work with other schools within the cluster to share good practice and discuss ideas with others. For example, teachers in the cluster visit each other's schools regularly to discuss and develop foundation learning practices and digital skills further. Overall, leaders create an appropriate culture and ethos to promote, enable and support staff's professional learning. In the best practice, leaders and co-ordinators research the needs of staff in relation to the school's priorities for improvement. Although staff undertake professional learning activities, there are few opportunities for them to engage in professional dialogue with leaders to discuss their performance and development needs.

## 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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