



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

A report on
Ysgol Gynradd Ffairfach

**Heol Bethlehem
Ffairfach
Llandeilo
Carmarthenshire
SA19 6SY**

Date of inspection: June 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol Gynradd Ffairfach

Name of provider	Ysgol Gynradd Ffairfach
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	95
Pupils of statutory school age	80
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	6
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>	17.6%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 16.1%)</i>	15.0%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	28.8%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	12/06/2023

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

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

Overview

Ysgol Gynradd Ffairfach provides a happy and hardworking environment where pupils show respect and behaviour of the highest standard. The school is an inclusive learning community where all pupils are respected and developed as well-rounded and responsible individuals. Staff care for the health and well-being of pupils highly successfully. They provide valuable opportunities for pupils to discuss their feelings and have support with their learning and emotional well-being, where necessary. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is a strength.

Staff provide a rich curriculum that includes the pupil's voice regularly. Teachers plan exciting and interesting activities for pupils, which develop them successfully as independent learners from a young age. They use the classrooms and the wider area to stimulate pupils' learning and support their education highly effectively during learning sessions and break times. Most pupils develop their skills soundly during their time at the school.

The school has a strong Welsh ethos, and many pupils regularly converse naturally in Welsh. Pupils are given experiences that develop them to become citizens who are proud and knowledgeable about their area and heritage. They are an integral part of the village and the wider community.

The headteacher, assistant headteacher and all staff create an effective team that works for the benefit of pupils. They meet with staff from other schools in the federation regularly to share good practice, learn from each other and make the most of their resources. Leaders identify the school's strengths and are aware of what needs to be improved, although priorities are not always clear enough or easy to measure efficiently. The governing body is very supportive of the school and knows it well. Members are very knowledgeable about a number of important aspects of the school, including funding. As a result, they provide relevant support and challenge and ensure value for money.

Recommendations

R1 Ensure that the school's priorities for improvement are clear and measurable

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, many pupils' skills are lower than, or similar to, what is expected for their age. During their time at the school, most pupils, including those with ALN, make sound progress in their learning.

Across the school, most pupils develop Welsh listening and speaking skills very well from an early age. They enjoy singing nursery rhymes that enrich their vocabulary and introduce language patterns that are relevant to the class themes. By doing so, they become increasingly confident speakers. Many pupils speak Welsh spontaneously in lessons and at break times, including while working and playing with their peers.

Nearly all of the youngest pupils develop reading skills successfully and come to recognise the sound and form of letters from an early age. They use suitable methods to attempt to read unfamiliar words. They begin to apply their reading skills in different contexts. Many of the oldest pupils continue to develop their reading skills appropriately in both languages. A few begin to read with expression which considers the reader as they read. Most pupils apply their reading skills in their work across the curriculum skilfully. For example, they gather information from the internet to learn about different countries that are playing football in the World Cup tournament.

The youngest pupils develop early writing skills well. Nearly all are beginning to experiment with mark making and many are beginning to write for different purposes successfully. Most of the youngest pupils develop sound writing skills by the end of Year 2. They write with increasing accuracy, spell familiar words and are beginning to punctuate their work appropriately, for example when writing instructions on how to bake bread. Most of the oldest pupils recognise the features of different genres of writing and emulate these successfully in their work. They enrich their work to write increasingly skilfully and consider the requirements of the reader. For example, they describe the Easter story correctly. Most pupils develop legible handwriting and many present their work neatly and methodically.

Most pupils develop a sound understanding of mathematical concepts. The youngest pupils come to recognise numbers and shapes and develop a good understanding of measurement. Most apply their numeracy skills effectively in their activities both inside and outside the classroom. For example, they use a tally chart correctly to record the types of litter they have collected and identify the temperature on a thermometer when studying the weather. By the end of Year 6, many make suitable use of their numeracy skills in their work across the curriculum. For example, they calculate the journey of different foods that arrive in Wales when considering climate change and use a Venn diagram skilfully to compare the 'wizards' world with the real world.

Across the school, most pupils develop sound digital skills. From an early age, many log in to their Hwb accounts independently. They find information about Aneurin Bevan skilfully online as part of their work on the National Health Service. They use a digital art package independently, for example when drawing a picture of characters

from their reading books. The oldest pupils use design packages creatively to create St Dwynwen's Day cards and add appropriate pictures and text.

Most pupils develop their creative skills successfully. The youngest pupils print colourful patterns with apples and paint a butterfly skilfully. The oldest pupils create attractive posters to promote the work of an international charity. Many apply their creative skills skilfully when working with the peers from the other schools in the federation and the cluster. For example, they sing, recite and dance in a multimedia performance to convey the legend of Llyn y Fan Fach.

Across the school, pupils develop sound physical skills and take full advantage of a variety of opportunities to keep fit during leisure times. For example, the youngest pupils develop their skills successfully while playing with digging equipment in the sand area or when building a nest for woodlice. Most pupils develop their physical skills regularly while playing hockey and when controlling two and three-wheeled bicycles skilfully.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils enjoy the school's life and work and feel safe within a supportive and inclusive learning community. They show pride in their school and develop as confident and creative learners. Pupils are polite and thoughtful. They are well behaved and treat their peers and visitors with respect and care. The oldest pupils care maturely for the youngest pupils by playing together during break times. This is a strong feature of the school.

Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to staying healthy. They show enjoyment when taking part in physical activities, including leading warm-up sessions in physical education lessons. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe online, for example by taking part in appropriate activities during online safety week and receiving advice from the local police officer. Most pupils develop as ethical and knowledgeable citizens. For example, they sing and undertake activities jointly with older residents in a specific home in the local community. They have a strong sense of fairness and equality and ensuring that everyone has equal opportunities is very important to the school's pupils. Many pupils develop their creative skills successfully. They work with local poets and artists and perform regularly for members of the local community, for example during a literary festival.

Pupils who are members of the school council shoulder their responsibilities enthusiastically. They contribute effectively to the school's life and work and develop their leadership skills effectively. For example, they develop their understanding of the importance of recycling, saving energy and reducing water waste within the school by sharing useful information with their peers. The council is also extremely proud of the talent show that it organised to raise money for charity.

Most pupils across the school show positive attitudes towards their learning. They listen attentively to staff's instructions and concentrate diligently on their work during lessons. Most are enthusiastic learners who apply themselves confidently to new experiences. Nearly all pupils work effectively with their friends and adults and offer support to each other voluntarily. The independent learning skills of most pupils across the school develop successfully. For example, the youngest pupils use the

indoor and outdoor learning areas highly effectively to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Most of the oldest pupils also persevere for extended periods when applying their skills in independent learning activities. Most pupils respond enthusiastically when influencing what they learn within their termly themes. For example, the oldest pupils learn and share information about the importance of keeping healthy by performing a sketch for the youngest pupils. This strengthens their commitment to their work effectively. As a result, they show strong motivation and an innate interest in their work. Most pupils discuss their work confidently with staff and peers. They respond appropriately to feedback within lessons and, as a result, they have a sound understanding of what they need to improve in their work. In the best practice, they are beginning to develop their work as a result of appropriate feedback from adults.

Teaching and learning experiences

Teachers and assistants have a productive working relationship with pupils. Staff treat pupils equally and with respect, which adds to the caring ethos throughout the school. They have high expectations, which creates an effective learning environment in the classrooms and outdoor areas. As a result, the learning areas are purposeful spaces where pupils immerse themselves successfully in their learning.

Across the school, teachers deliver activities with stimulating and lively presentations. They communicate with pupils by using correct Welsh which, in turn, enriches pupils' language effectively. They question skilfully to provide valuable opportunities for pupils to recall information from previous activities. By doing so, staff support pupils to move learning forwards purposefully. As a result, most pupils respond well and make sound progress. Teachers plan activities that provide an appropriate challenge for pupils. They plan continuous opportunities for pupils to develop their skills to be independent learners, which includes giving them opportunities to reflect on their work. The oldest pupils are given beneficial opportunities to research their theme work further with increasing independence.

Staff promote the principles of foundation learning well. Teachers plan a highly effective range of rich activities that support pupils to apply their skills in the outdoor learning areas, for example by using water and a mop to identify letters. Staff also ensure very good use of the outdoor areas during break times by providing appropriate resources, such as large scales in the sand area, two and three-wheeled bicycles and purposeful construction equipment. Teachers provide exciting opportunities for pupils to make choices about the activities they would like to complete, for example by planning jointly in a digital document to suggest ideas for their themes. As a result, many pupils develop enthusiasm towards their work.

The school provides a curriculum that is inclusive and is adapted appropriately to ensure that it is accessible to all pupils. On the whole, staff provide a comprehensive range of activities that develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills beneficially. They provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their creative skills by working with local artists, for example, and by developing their performing skills and competing in eisteddfodau. Useful opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their digital skills, for example by creating a logo to advertise the sale of the school's chickens' eggs.

Teachers and assistants provide beneficial oral feedback during lessons. Staff provide regular encouragement as pupils work on their activities. This helps pupils to develop their skills successfully there and then. In the best practice, teachers' written feedback helps pupils to improve their work. Pupils are given beneficial opportunities to respond to this feedback.

Teachers provide useful information about pupils' progress regularly, for example by inviting parents to '*Dewch i Ddathlu*' events. During these evenings, pupils share and celebrate their work with their parents, while teachers are available to discuss any specific issues. The school enriches pupils' learning experiences with a range of visitors and visits. For example, a nurse visits the classes to discuss the National Health Service and a community group presents stories from the Bible regularly. The oldest pupils are given beneficial opportunities to go to the Urdd residential centre on a joint visit with peers from the other schools in the federation. As a result, pupils develop robust relationships and links, particularly when preparing to transfer to secondary education.

Care, support and guidance

Ysgol Ffairfach is a friendly and welcoming community that promotes happiness, courtesy and good behaviour. The caring ethos towards all pupils is a strength of the school. Staff create an exceptionally inclusive and safe learning environment where pupils feel that they are valued.

Teachers and assistants work well together to promote and develop pupils' well-being. They place a high priority on ensuring that they address the needs of all pupils. There are robust and highly effective arrangements in place to support pupils' emotional, health and social needs. Staff foster a sound relationship with pupils, which promotes beneficial attitudes towards their well-being. For example, staff provide valuable and timely opportunities for pupils to identify any concerns on a daily basis.

There is highly effective provision to support pupils with ALN. The ALN co-ordinator has rigorous processes for identifying pupils' learning and well-being needs. As a result of skilful planning of provision, pupils receive support that meets their needs successfully. Staff have purposeful arrangements for tracking the progress of pupils with ALN which relate to the targets in their individual development plans and their progress from their starting points. As a result, most pupils who need additional support with their learning or well-being make robust progress. The ALN co-ordinator works effectively in partnership with the assistants, staff from other schools and external agencies to provide effective support for learners. The school is preparing well for planning and implementation as part of the process of ALN reform.

The school provides rich opportunities to celebrate and develop pupils' understanding of their identity, heritage and culture. The school is the focal point of its community and takes full advantage of opportunities to hold activities in the local area, for example by creating purposeful pieces of art and displaying them in the local surgery as part of the Urdd Eisteddfod project. There are also valuable opportunities for pupils to take part in local performances and events, for example by working with local poets and artists to create a performance of a local legend, 'Y

Robin Ddu'. However, there are very few opportunities for pupils to develop a purposeful awareness of diversity and multicultural communities more widely.

Staff promote the importance of healthy eating and encourage physical fitness through a range of physical education activities, which include suitable opportunities for pupils to take part in sports competitions. Staff use the local playing fields regularly to organise and provide a range of activities that contribute well to pupils' well-being and enjoyment of their learning. The outdoor play areas on the playground are attractive and encourage pupils successfully to undertake physical activity during lessons and break times.

Collective worship arrangements provide valuable opportunities to support pupils to learn about issues relating to various beliefs and reflect on fundamental questions and their own values. Regular virtual assemblies are held jointly between the schools in the federation and pupils are given opportunities to play an active part in them. Children's rights are a regular part of the assemblies. As a result, pupils' understanding of their rights is developing well.

Staff provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to voice an opinion to contribute to their learning and to school life. This enriches their experiences and prepares them well to take responsibility for their decisions and consider the views of others. Most pupils express an opinion about their learning by planning for the class themes. Staff ensure that the school council has a wider influence on school life by seeking their opinion on developing quiet areas on the playground and by playing a proactive part in developing the pupils' toilets.

Staff promote a culture of safeguarding effectively and the arrangements are not a cause for concern. The procedure for reporting safeguarding concerns about pupils are robust and staff make timely referrals to external agencies, where appropriate. The school has robust processes for monitoring pupils' attendance and punctuality.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision for the federation, which includes celebrating the identity of the three individual schools. Pupils, parents, staff and governors value the advantages of being part of a federation, but also take pride in their distinct communities and what makes the three schools unique. The headteacher and all staff ensure that pupils across the federation receive the best education to prepare them for the future and that they have 'roots to grow and wings to fly'. This supports pupils to be happy and make sound progress in their skills.

The headteacher is supported by the enthusiastic and hardworking assistant headteachers of the three schools. They have clear strategic objectives and, together, they ensure that the arrangements and management of the schools intertwine in order to learn from each other and share resources effectively. The headteacher has high expectations of her own performance and that of the staff. She allocates responsibilities strategically and successfully, for example when re-structuring the curriculum groups following an audit of staff skills. All members of staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Leaders develop the element of teamwork effectively among the staff. Teachers and assistants are

dedicated and contribute successfully to the efforts of the whole federation to provide a well-rounded education and effective well-being support for pupils.

The governing body is highly supportive of the three schools in the federation and knows their unique qualities and local communities well. Governors rotate the location of the meetings to ensure that all members get to know and understand the needs of the three sites well. They visit the schools regularly and hold beneficial discussions with staff about elements of provision. This is beginning to support their understanding of issues relating to teaching and learning and the schools' current arrangements appropriately. The governing body ensures that the school promotes healthy eating and drinking regularly among pupils. They make good use of the range of expertise and experience of members of the governing body. For example, members of the health and safety committee have worked closely with the local authority to provide a bus stop closer to the school entrance to strengthen the school's safeguarding processes.

The headteacher, by working closely with the governors' finance sub-committee, manages the budget robustly across the federation to support the strategic priorities, including improving pupils' skills. Leaders ensure that Ysgol Ffairfach has enough good quality resources to meet the needs of pupils sensibly. Staff share resources effectively across the federation, when necessary, to ensure value for money, for example specialist digital equipment. They support specific pupils successfully to reduce the effects of poverty on their learning by using the pupil development grant effectively.

Leaders have a full timetable for evaluating provision and pupils' outcomes. They ensure that teachers meet together regularly to scrutinise the books of the federation's pupils and discuss best practice. They consider evidence that shows the schools' progress against the priorities of the whole federation. Leaders conduct regular learning walks and observe teaching and learning, and provide useful feedback to confirm strengths and suggest steps forward. They identify most of the federation's strengths and areas for development accurately and identify an extensive number of priorities to be implemented. However, priorities are not always detailed enough or easy to measure efficiently.

Leaders respond well to local and national priorities. The federation's staff deliver the Curriculum for Wales appropriately and are preparing thoroughly to implement the ALN Act by ensuring appropriate support for pupils. The school has beneficial partnerships and links with a number of local organisations. For example, staff have a strong relationship with the Cylch Meithrin which is situated on the same site. This contributes soundly to providing a valuable experiences as pupils transfer to the school.

Leaders create a positive culture of promoting and supporting staff's professional learning. There are extensive opportunities for them to attend courses and training that link directly to their individual needs and the federation's priorities. They work closely with each other and other schools in the catchment area to share good practice regularly. Following training, staff cascade useful information and resources to their colleagues.

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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