



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

A report on
Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr

Talbot Street
Gowerton
Swansea
SA4 3DB

Date of inspection: October 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr

Name of provider	Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr
Local authority	City and County of Swansea
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	1113
Pupils of statutory school age	945
Number in sixth form	168
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Secondary is 20.2%)	7.8%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Secondary is 17.8%)	16.9%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	27.5%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	06/02/2015
Start date of inspection	16/10/2023

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

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

Overview

Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr is a caring and happy community, with a strong Welsh ethos where pupils and staff show pride in their school. The headteacher, senior leaders and the school's staff place a clear priority on supporting well-being and promoting a positive culture of inclusion, respect and raising aspirations.

Most pupils behave in a civilised manner around the school, are welcoming and polite and willing to talk to visitors. Many pupils behave well in lessons. Overall, pupils are clear about whom to approach when they need help and support and they appreciate the strong support they receive. A high proportion of pupils develop valuable leadership skills and, through the work of the school council and various working groups, they raise their peers' awareness of important issues, such as respecting diversity, rights and social problems. Sixth-form pupils make a valuable contribution to the life of the school and have mature social skills.

The school provides a host of opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities which enrich their education. In these clubs, pupils are given valuable experiences to develop their subject knowledge and understanding or to take advantage of cultural or physical exercise opportunities. Younger pupils are given beneficial opportunities to develop their personal and social skills through health and well-being lessons. The physical well-being, nutritional well-being and holistic well-being lessons are planned skilfully and provide a valuable range of purposeful learning experiences that help pupils to develop as healthy, confident and independent learners. This is a strong feature of the curriculum.

In lessons, many pupils make appropriate progress in their subject knowledge, skills and understanding. In these lessons, there is careful planning that engages pupils' interest and provides them with appropriate challenge. However, a few teachers do not plan their lessons effectively enough to ensure that pupils make sufficient progress.

The senior leadership team work well together and place considerable importance on fostering a caring and supportive ethos. Responsibilities across the leadership team overlap slightly and this prevents leaders from addressing improving teaching and learning in full. In addition, leaders at all levels are not part of the process of evaluating the school's work and there is not a wide enough range of activities to ensure that leaders gain a complete picture of the strengths and areas for improvement. They do not evaluate teaching by considering its effect on learning in sufficient detail.

Child safeguarding arrangements are appropriate and all staff understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. The school site is extensive and open and, as a result, there are a few health and safety issues which are cause for concern. The condition of the 'Y Tŷ' building itself is deteriorating and does not meet the requirements or needs of pupils who attend it.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve the shortcomings identified about teaching in the report
- R2 Ensure that leaders at all levels have clear and strategic responsibilities to drive improvements across the school
- R3 Ensure that all leaders undertake a wide range of quality assurance activities and strengthen their ability to evaluate the impact of provision on pupils' progress
- R4 Work with the local authority to address the health and safety issues identified during the inspection

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 physical well-being, nutritional well-being and holistic well-being lessons that are delivered to the school's youngest pupils, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Learning

Over time, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make good progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills. Many have a sound understanding of previous learning and they succeed in applying this to new and unfamiliar contexts. In a few cases, where teaching is highly effective, pupils make very strong progress and demonstrate a particularly thorough understanding. However, in a few cases, pupils do not make enough progress, mainly due to shortcomings in teachers' planning.

Many pupils listen attentively and considerately to presentations by their teachers and to the contributions of their peers. Many pupils speak confidently and are very willing to contribute orally, often giving extended answers. They work together effectively in discussion groups and share their ideas enthusiastically. More able pupils are fluent and confident speakers who contribute sensibly to discussions by using a wide range of vocabulary in Welsh and English. A few pupils have a tendency to offer short answers that are not developed in full. Often, this is due to the nature of the teacher's questioning. In a minority of lessons, pupils turn to each other and discuss in English when they are expected to discuss in Welsh.

Many pupils develop useful reading skills while gathering information and locating facts in extended texts. Many can combine evidence from a range of sources to draw sensible conclusions, for example when discussing topics such as obesity in Welsh Baccalaureate lessons. Many pupils are able to identify messages that are implicit in texts correctly, for example when analysing the pictorial source of 'Gin Lane' by Hogarth in history lessons. When opportunities arise, many pupils are confident when reading aloud. They vary their tone of voice effectively to match the requirements of the piece, for example when reading a scene between Wes and Els from the play 'Crash'. More able pupils have sophisticated higher-order reading skills. They recognise stylistic features and discuss their effect on the reader skilfully.

Many pupils demonstrate sound writing skills and write effectively for different purposes. They structure sentences and paragraphs appropriately in Welsh and English. For example, in geography lessons, pupils succeed in writing effective speeches about deforestation. The most able pupils have rich and sophisticated vocabulary and express their opinions skilfully and eloquently. However, the written work of a minority of pupils is littered with awkward syntax, grammatical errors and English words. They have difficulty expressing their ideas and findings logically and clearly because they are not given enough guidance or specific instructions by their subject teachers on how to structure their work.

In mathematics lessons and other relevant subjects, many pupils develop their number skills successfully. They have a sound grasp of number concepts and use them confidently, for example when making calculations. Most are able to use data handling skills effectively, for example when using the mean to compare two sets of data. Many draw a scatter graph and add lines of best fit, as appropriate. When they are given an opportunity to do so, these pupils analyse graphs sensibly. They show a good understanding of composite measures, such as speed and population density, in their science and geography lessons. As they move through the school, around half of pupils develop more advanced skills, such as rearranging formulae. A minority of pupils are not confident when applying and developing their number skills in new contexts as they are overly dependent on quick methods that allow them to find answers without having to understand the logic of working out.

In their information technology lessons and in opportunities across the curriculum, many pupils develop their digital skills successfully. For example, in science lessons, pupils use spreadsheets to create scatter graphs and solve formulae and, in Welsh lessons, pupils create podcasts on current affairs.

Pupils who attend the local authority's specialist unit, 'Y Tŷ', which is on the school's campus, make good progress in relation to their abilities and needs. Nearly all engage well with tasks and show pride in their achievements. Older pupils develop the confidence to attend lessons in the mainstream to pursue courses that interest them.

Many pupils have strong thinking skills. When they are given an opportunity to do so, they use their thinking skills skilfully, for example in geography lessons when they identify what Captain Scott, Elon Musk and Sir David Attenborough have in common. Many demonstrate appropriate physical skills, for example when evaluating and improving their technique when playing badminton or volleyball. Overall, pupils

develop their creative skills successfully, for example when experimenting and using various objects to reinforce their practical work in drama lessons.

Overall, sixth-form pupils are keen and responsible learners. Many express themselves effectively orally when discussing their work and their contribution to school life. Sixth-form pupils make strong progress in their skills and subject knowledge.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils at Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr are proud to belong to a safe and caring community and enjoy coming to school daily. Most pupils state that they are not bullied and they know whom to approach should anything cause them concern. They value the support that is available to them from their teachers, the welfare team and support staff, in addition to provision at the '*Trobwynt*', '*Gilfach*' and '*Encil*' centres. Nearly all pupils at '*Y Ty*' specialist centre enjoy the school, feel safe, receive good support in lessons and show an interest in their work.

Most pupils behave in a civilised manner around the school during break time, lunchtime and while moving along the corridors. Nearly all arrive at their lessons punctually, settle quickly and engage with the starter task appropriately. Many behave well in lessons and persevere to complete their activities. However, in a few lessons, pupils do not concentrate well enough on their work and talk to their peers instead of persevering with tasks and completing them to the best of their ability.

Most pupils learn how to make healthy choices in relation to diet, physical activity and emotional well-being in the physical well-being, holistic well-being and nutritional well-being lessons. Pupils benefit from opportunities to take part in a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities such as badminton, football and hockey. A large number of pupils attend various clubs regularly. This is a notable strength of the school, which is valued greatly by pupils. They take pride in the physical, creative, cultural and additional learning opportunities and experiences that are available to them.

Pupils benefit from a range of valuable opportunities to undertake leadership roles through the school council and the various working groups. These working groups work diligently and raise others' awareness of important issues such as the dangers of vaping, women's rights and the importance of raising money for local and national charities.

Sixth-form pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning and contribute fully to the life and community of the school. They have sound social skills and lead and have a positive influence on the school's younger pupils, for example by supporting them with their French studies. They communicate effectively with visitors and share their opinions confidently.

Whole-school attendance levels have been consistent over the past two years but remain slightly lower than the pre-pandemic levels. The attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is slightly lower than that of their peers.

Teaching and learning experiences

The supportive and positive working relationship between teachers and pupils is a strong feature of teaching. Many teachers set high expectations for pupils and establish consistent and methodical routines within the class, which promote a hard-working and supportive ethos. These teachers use effective classroom management strategies to address any minor disruption.

On the whole, many teachers plan a sequence of beneficial activities that support pupils to make progress. They provide useful resources and question pupils regularly to test their knowledge and check their understanding of previous learning. A majority of teachers remind pupils to use language of a high standard in lessons and correct subject terminology purposefully. However, in a minority of instances, staff are not consistent in terms of ensuring that group discussions happen in Welsh.

In a few cases where teaching is highly effective, teachers are energetic and inspire pupils to learn. They plan activities skilfully to build the level of challenge effectively and ensure that the work corresponds well to the requirements of individual pupils. In these cases, teachers present enthusiastically and use a brisk tempo that keeps pupils on task and matches their progress very effectively. These teachers question pupils skilfully and encourage them to justify or extend their responses to probe their understanding.

In a few cases, the nature of tasks and the pace of lessons do not enable pupils to fulfil their potential. For example, teachers do not provide a suitable level of challenge or support to pupils across the range of ability. They plan a series of short tasks to keep pupils busy rather than considering what pupils need to know, understand or achieve. A few teachers only use closed questions and do not probe pupils' thinking sufficiently. In a few examples, teachers rely on the same pupils to answer questions.

Teachers move around the class to ensure that pupils finish tasks and respond to them appropriately. A majority of teachers provide constructive and timely feedback which is useful for pupils to improve their work. In a few cases, teachers assess understanding highly effectively through a series of timely questions. Overall, teachers praise correct answers appropriately to raise pupils' confidence and motivation within lessons. However, at times, they praise short and undeveloped answers too much.

In most cases, teachers provide relevant feedback on pupils' work. They identify areas that are in need of improvement and give pupils specific targets to improve their work. When they are given an opportunity to do so, pupils respond to the feedback by re-drafting or improving their performance. At times, written comments are not clear enough to guide pupils to improve their work.

The school introduced its Curriculum for Wales in September 2022 after planning and experimenting. As a result of regular evaluation and refinement, the plans offer a range of stimulating and challenging experiences for pupils across the areas of learning and experience. Staff have worked closely with their partner primary schools to ensure smooth curricular transition. They also develop useful success criteria to assess pupils' progress in their subject skills and understanding. A notable aspect of

the school's planning is new programmes, for the youngest pupils, which include lessons in physical well-being, nutritional well-being and holistic well-being.

Overall, departments provide useful opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. The skills co-ordinators provide useful training for departments on how to teach specific aspects, such as how to draw scatter graphs. However, the work of co-ordinating provision to ensure progress over time in skills across the subjects is at an early stage of development.

The school provides an appropriate variety of courses in key stage 4 which meet the needs of interests of nearly all pupils. By working with nearby colleges, pupils can choose a few vocational courses. However, this provision is only available in English. Staff provide useful opportunities for pupils who are in danger of disengaging from their studies to undertake work experience as a plumber and electrician. The partnership between Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr and another Welsh comprehensive school provides a very wide range of courses for pupils in the sixth form.

Pupils at 'Y Tŷ' benefit from a curriculum that is tailored especially for them. Learning experiences meet the needs of a wide range of abilities and interests and teaching assistants support pupils well, although they do too much for them at times.

The school advises pupils effectively to ensure that they follow the most appropriate paths for them for the future. Pupils have access to a careers officer and there is a range of useful activities relating to the world of work, including some provided in Welsh Baccalaureate lessons. Year 12 pupils organise a week of work experience themselves and pupils in Years 11 and 13 are given an opportunity to take part in mock interviews with local employers.

Provision for personal and social education (PSE) is co-ordinated and organised in detail. There is a beneficial focus on protected characteristics and, as a result, pupils have a clear awareness of issues relating to equality and diversity.

Outside the curriculum, the school provides valuable and varied experiences for pupils to develop their interests, whether physical or cultural. These include sports clubs, choirs, bands, Shakespeare plays, a dance club, a coding club, an orchestra and a karaoke club. There are also beneficial opportunities for pupils to extend their learning through after-school Latin lessons, a STEM club, a 'chemistry Olympiad' club and the 'Medclub', which supports pupils who are interesting in pursuing a medicine course at university.

Care, support and guidance

Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr is a caring and inclusive community that prioritises the well-being of pupils in a familial and close-knit environment. An effective team of staff ensures purposeful and personal support that is tailored deliberately to meet the individual needs of pupils.

The heads of year and a specialist team of pastoral staff support pupils to deal with their emotional, social and behavioural needs effectively. Where necessary, the appropriate support allows pupils to resume their learning, rebuild their self-confidence and continue to make progress. Leaders have recently reorganised

the system for tracking behaviour, personal development and the school's reward system. Staff use the outcomes of this system to communicate pupils' successes, which contributes to the sense of positivity for the whole-school community.

The purposeful co-operation between the additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) and the dedicated team of assistants ensures that effective support is provided to pupils with specific learning difficulties. The school gets to know pupils' needs at an early stage through the strong links with partner primary schools. The ALNCo attends the reviews of Year 5 and 6 pupils to make contact with the families, which provides a sound basis for the beginning of the journey at secondary school.

The school has robust processes to implement the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act and individual education plans provide detailed information about pupils' needs, in addition to specific targets. The school monitors pupils' progress from their individual starting points and reports to parents regularly. There is a useful weekly bulletin to share beneficial information about ALN issues with staff and occasional training sessions are held about different needs and conditions. However, teachers do not receive enough training on teaching strategies to support pupils with ALN.

The support hubs, namely '*Yr Encil*', '*Trobwynt*' and '*Y Gilfach*' and the improvement unit provide a wide range of targeted interventions and support and pupils who attend them feel safe and happy. For example, pupils with emotional needs have access to specific provision to help them deal with their emotions and cope with daily life. Appropriate input is received from a number of agencies and partners to ensure beneficial provision.

The specialist unit, '*Y Tŷ*', provides education for secondary pupils with a range of special needs and there is a close and constructive relationship between staff and pupils. Staff know the pupils and their individual needs well and, as a result, can ensure that those needs are met. The unit's older pupils develop the confidence to attend lessons in the mainstream to pursue courses that interest them. This integration is a strength and is planned around the aspirations of pupils and their families. However, the quality of the specialist unit's building is deteriorating and in poor condition to meet the needs of these pupils.

Developing moral attitudes and promoting tolerance is embraced strongly within the school community. Timely messages and hot topics are presented sensitively by staff and older pupils in services and registration periods. The school has maintained the tradition of singing a hymn together and this reinforces the spiritual, moral, social and Welsh culture. The school has evaluated and refined its methods of responding to the rare cases of bullying and staff deal with these issues quickly. Pastoral staff check the effect of their work by questioning pupils to ensure that any case has been resolved successfully. Beneficial opportunities are provided for pupils to voice their opinion on bullying and questionnaires are responded to regularly.

The school council is representative of all of the school's pupils and is an influential body. The school provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to discuss and influence the content of PSE sessions, for example LGBTQ+ rights, anti-racism, women's rights, Welshness and e-learning. Health and well-being lessons have been planned carefully to cover physical well-being, holistic well-being and nutritional well-being.

The school promotes good attendance. There are high expectations in terms of attendance and punctuality through regular and thorough communication between the well-being leaders, support staff and the school's staff. There is regular tracking and monitoring to notice any reasons or patterns and they are acted upon quickly.

The school provides numerous opportunities for pupils to develop their physical and emotional well-being through the medium of Welsh, for example by being part of sports and athletics teams, choirs and Urdd activities. There are opportunities to attend revision sessions and the sixth-form benefit from valuable guidance to develop independent study skills. Information about subjects and career paths, such as apprenticeships or returning to study at school, is shared clearly with pupils.

The school has detailed arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe and this has led to a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff and governors receive regular, beneficial training in this area and, as a result, they have a good understanding of their roles. Staff receive dedicated training on preventing radicalisation on a regular basis and understand how to refer any issues that may arise. There are robust arrangements for recording and referring safeguarding or child protection issues. Leaders use relevant information from various sources effectively to identify vulnerable pupils and ensure that they monitor the well-being of these pupils carefully.

A number of health and safety issues regarding the accommodation of the special education centre, 'Y Tŷ' and the school site came to the attention of the inspection team. The headteacher is aware of these and is working with the local education authority to resolve them. The school will receive a well-being letter to draw attention to all of the issues.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is a passionate leader who embodies the spirit of the school's motto, '*Gorau byw, cyd-fyw*', through his commitment to creating an inclusive school. He succeeds in creating a familial Welsh ethos with a firm focus on working together to support the well-being and education of each individual. This vision is based on agreed values that are shared and realised by the school's staff and governors. The school community understands the importance of ensuring that all pupils have a positive educational experience.

The senior leadership team works together well to support the headteacher and fulfil their roles. Through their good knowledge of staff and pupils, they succeed in maintaining a supportive, open-door ethos and this has a positive effect on the well-being of the school community. However, the responsibilities of the senior leadership team and other leaders are duplicated or overlap in a few important areas, which hinders them in terms of working effectively.

Overall, leaders succeed in giving due attention to local and national priorities. The school has made strong progress in implementing its vision for the Curriculum for Wales. Over time, staff have developed, revised and refined provision sensibly. The school also acts purposefully to reduce the barriers to learning for pupils who are eligible for free school meals or are from low-income families. The school has clear and purposeful procedures to improve pupils' attendance and there is a robust culture of safeguarding which is well understood by pupils, staff and governors.

The school has a suitable calendar of quality assurance activities. Members of the senior leadership team undertake purposeful self-evaluation activities to scrutinise pupils' work and pupil's voice sessions. Many middle managers also undertake quality assurance activities within their individual departments. Leaders also analyse data validly. As a result, they have broadly identified priorities for development and the school and departmental development plans reflect these. However, many of the actions within the plans relate to raising standards and improving provision for Year 11 pupils only and not enough attention is given to improving the quality of teaching and the skills of younger pupils. In addition, the system of conducting learning walks according to specific themes has prevented leaders from gaining a complete picture of strengths and areas for improvement. Therefore, leaders at all levels do not conduct a sufficient range of activities to evaluate their work or give sufficient consideration to the effect that teaching has on pupils' standards. Although middle leaders value the regular link meetings between themselves and members of the senior leadership team, these meetings focus on operational issues at the expense of discussing teaching and learning.

The school has an appropriate performance management system in which leaders at all levels play an active role. Through this system and a professional learning questionnaire, leaders have a good knowledge of the staff's professional learning needs. There is an extensive programme of opportunities to respond to these needs, which includes a varied menu of internal training sessions, opportunities to work with other schools and work with external providers. Beneficial opportunities are provided for staff to develop as leaders by attending relevant training courses and shadowing other leaders to develop an understanding of their responsibilities. The school also provides useful professional learning resources, such as a weekly teaching and learning bulletin, '*Crynhoi Clou*' sessions and a 'Teaching and Learning' area on the teachers' internal website. However, leaders do not evaluate the effect of professional learning on pupils' learning and progress incisively enough.

Members of the governing body are highly supportive of the school. They are keen to contribute to the life and work of the school and are very willing to give of their time. Governors are developing as critical friends and make a valuable contribution to the work of various committees and as link members for departments and areas of learning and experience. Governors have a suitable understanding of their role to promote healthy eating and drinking.

The school has recently strengthened the methods used to communicate with parents and carers. It uses an electronic system to share key information and celebrate pupils' successes. This has a positive effect on the school's relationship with parents. The school also uses the school's website and other digital platforms beneficially to share important information with the school community.

The headteacher and the school's business team monitor the school's expenditure and budget. Governors receive regular information about the financial situation and they consider the school's priorities prudently when making decisions on expenditure. As part of this, senior leaders give sensible consideration to meeting the needs of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those from low-income households. For example, they secure financial support for school trips and musical instrument lessons. There is a suitable plan for spending the Pupil Development Grant in

2023-2024. However, leaders do not evaluate the effect of spending to reduce the effect of poverty on pupils' attainment incisively enough.

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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