



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

**A report on**

**Ysgol Gymraeg Ifor Hael**

**Meon Close  
Bettws  
NP20 7DU**

**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 Gymraeg Ifor Hael

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Name of provider   | Ysgol Gymraeg Ifor Hael |
| Local authority  | City of Newport Council |
| Language of the provider   | Welsh                   |
| Type of school   | Primary                 |
| Religious character  | *                       |
| Number of pupils on roll   | 194                     |
| Pupils of statutory school age   | 150                     |
| Number in nursery classes (if applicable)  | 24                      |
| Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average<br><i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 23.0%)</i> | 21.2%                   |
| Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a)<br><i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 16.1%)</i>               | 10.7%                   |
| Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home  | 9.0%                    |
| Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language   | 0.0%                    |
| Date of headteacher appointment  | 01/09/2022              |
| Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)  |                         |
| Start date of inspection   | 23/10/2023              |

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

Leaders have a clear and robust vision for the school, which is based on develop pupils' well-being and Welsh language skills. They share this vision successfully with everyone in the school community. Other leaders support the headteacher effectively and there is a strong sense of working together as a team.

The headteacher has a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This has recently led to the use of effective methods to raise the standards of reading of nearly all pupils across the school. The headteacher is supported by governors who contribute appropriately to the school's vision and work. However, the governing body does not undertake its role effectively enough as part of the school's self-evaluation processes. As a result, it does not have a sound enough understanding of the most recent development.

Teachers plan a curriculum that provides a range of purposeful experiences for pupils across all areas of learning and experience. The pupil's voice is an important part of the process of planning activities and, as a result, most pupils apply themselves enthusiastically to their learning. There is a positive environment in the classrooms and they are hard-working learning communities. On the whole, teachers use a suitable range of effective teaching techniques. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers have a tendency to over-direct learning. This limits pupils' ability to make choices about how they present their work and the resources they would like to use.

One of the school's strongest features is the provision that is provided for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). Staff identify these pupils quickly and provide them with purposeful support to enable them to make sound progress in their skills over time.

Most pupils enjoy their time at the school, which is friendly, caring and supportive. They behave well and treat others with respect and courtesy. Most make sound progress in developing their skills across the areas of learning and experience. One notable strength is the way in which staff promote the Welsh language and Welsh culture in the school's life and work. As a result, nearly all pupils' Welsh language skills and their awareness of Welsh culture and traditions are developing soundly.

## Recommendations

- R1 Extend purposeful opportunities for pupils to make decisions about their learning with increasing independence
- R2 Ensure that members of the governing body participate fully in self-evaluation processes to identify all strengths and areas for improvement

## What happens next

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

## Main findings

### Learning

On entry to the school, many pupils' social and communication skills are lower than expected for their age and stage of development. From these starting points, most pupils, including those with ALN and those who are eligible for free school meals, make sound progress in their skills.

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

Most pupils' speaking skills are developing well in both languages. The youngest pupils use an increasing range of vocabulary purposefully in various situations. For example, Year 1 pupils are confident when choosing adjectives to describe nature during the autumn. As pupils move through the school, most pupils' oral skills continue to develop well. In the school's upper years, they communicate fluently in both languages and speak confidently in a range of contexts, for example as Year 6 pupils discuss the challenges faced by immigrants to Britain during the last century.

Nearly all pupils' reading skills develop effectively as they move through the school. In the reception class, most pupils recognise letters and associate them with their sounds with increasing accuracy. By Year 2, many read simple texts clearly and show increasing expression. They pay due attention to the range of relevant punctuation. At the top of the school, nearly all pupils make sound progress in their Welsh and English reading skills. They read intelligently and vary their tone of voice effectively. They use purposeful methods to build the meaning of unfamiliar words, for example when reading text about food rationing during the Second World War.

Most pupils make sound progress in developing their writing skills. The youngest pupils practise their early writing skills by using different equipment purposefully in the learning areas. They begin to form letters correctly and match sounds and letters successfully. As they move through the school, many pupils build on their writing skills skilfully in both languages. By Year 4, they show a firm grasp of familiar spelling patterns and begin to connect sentences to write extended pieces. By Year 6, most pupils adapt their style and structure to different texts effectively, for example when writing a formal letter about the effect of deforestation.

Most pupils' numeracy skills develop soundly during their time at the school. They build on previous learning consistently and foster new skills and concepts regularly. The calculation skills of many of the youngest pupils develop well; for example, pupils

in the nursery class count different objects up to 5. By Year 2, many identify even and odd numbers and place numbers up to 100 in the correct order. As they move through the school, most pupils' mathematics skills continue to develop strongly. By Year 3, they gather data to show the rainfall in Britain in a year and use this information effectively to create tables and charts of the results. In Year 6, most pupils have a sound understanding of the four rules and use them effectively to answer different mathematical problems, for example when calculating how many calories a rugby player eats for breakfast.

Most pupils' digital skills develop well. The youngest pupils use an electronic tablet confidently to enrich their learning, for example by using a code to access a Welsh song to reinforce familiar language patterns. As they move through the school, most pupils use a range of software successfully when researching to find information to support their learning. For example, Year 3 pupils research the features of dinosaurs before creating their own imaginary animals digitally. As part of the theme on 'Travel', many Year 5 pupils use software confidently to program instructions to control a rocket.

Most pupils' creative skills develop soundly across the school. In the school's lower years, most of the youngest pupils enjoy using a range of equipment and materials to create pictures and models. For example, as part of their theme, Year 1 pupils enjoy weaving to create African patterns. In the school's upper years, most pupils work imaginatively when experimenting with a wide variety of materials and techniques. For example, Year 4 pupils develop their creative skills effectively when using paint and pastels to emulate the work of famous artists.

Nearly all pupils develop their physical skills well. They take part in a variety of activities that promote their health and well-being effectively. For example, the youngest pupils run a race to collect conkers and practise their balancing skills on the bicycles. The oldest pupils take part in team games such as football, rugby and netball and develop robust skills in a variety of physical education lessons.

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

One of the school's strongest features is its inclusive nature, caring ethos and homely environment. As a result, nearly all pupils enjoy being part of the school community and feel valued by the staff. Across the school, pupils have a positive relationship with adults. Most pupils' behaviour is a strong feature and they treat each other and others with courtesy and respect. Nearly all pupils treat others with polite care and consideration and value the contributions of their peers.

Nearly all pupils feel safe and know whom to approach if something is worrying them. They appreciate that adults treat them fairly and with respect. This contributes successfully towards developing a close working relationship between staff and pupils. For example, members of the '*Grŵp Enfys*' group value regular opportunities to discuss sensitive issues with staff members, such as sexuality, racism and equality.

Nearly all pupils' understanding of the importance of being moral and principled citizens is developing strongly. They develop the ability and confidence to discuss their feelings and show empathy towards others who are less fortunate than

themselves. For example, the oldest pupils discuss the difference between their rights and the rights of children in Syria and Lebanon. By doing so, they develop their understanding of equity and equality effectively.

Most pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and show an interest in their work. They concentrate diligently on their learning activities for extended periods and demonstrate perseverance and resilience when completing their work. They work together in harmony when completing their tasks in small groups and as a whole class. Most pupils in the school's upper years have a sound understanding of the need to read their work carefully to correct any mistakes. They understand that this is an important part of the learning process. As a result, most pupils develop to become ambitious and confident learners who are ready to learn.

Most pupils have a good understanding of the importance of keeping fit and healthy. They enjoy using the variety of equipment that is available to them during break times, including the climbing equipment and obstacles. They are enthusiastic and hard working during physical education lessons and enjoy taking part in sports clubs, for example the football and netball clubs. They have a sound awareness of the importance of eating a balanced diet, including eating a variety of fruit and vegetables and drinking water regularly. Many pupils have a good understanding of online safety.

Nearly all pupils, including those with ALN, enjoy undertaking leadership roles and responsibilities by being members of the various '*Mae gen i Lais*' groups. They undertake their roles enthusiastically and take pride in their success. For example, members of the eco council are passionate about picking litter in the local area and recycling a variety of waste at the school, including plastic and batteries.

Most pupils feel that adults listen well to their views and give them good consideration in decisions that affect them. They respond positively to opportunities to influence what they would like to learn within their termly themes. At the beginning of each term, pupils share their ideas and add questions about what they would like to discover at the beginning of a new theme.

Pupils have recently expressed their views about provision by completing relevant questionnaires. As a result, leaders recognise the need to begin each day with a '*Cyfnod Croeso*' welcome period. Within these sessions pupils are given beneficial opportunities to express their feelings before beginning their daily tasks.

Nearly all pupils value opportunities to visit places that promote their understanding of Welsh culture and heritage. For example, Year 4 pupils enjoy visiting St Fagans as part of their work on Tudor houses. As part of the transition arrangements with the secondary school, Year 6 pupils enjoy the opportunity to go on a residential trip to Gilwern and meet other pupils from the catchment area. As a result, most pupils' self-confidence and ability to communicate and work with others develop well.

## **Teaching and learning experiences**

The school's arrangements for introducing the Curriculum for Wales are developing effectively. Teachers work together and plan purposefully to provide interesting and stimulating experiences that cover the areas of learning and experience

appropriately. All members of staff are effective language models and this has a positive effect on most pupils' oral Welsh skills. Leaders have recently introduced a purposeful scheme to improve pupils' reading. This is effective in ensuring that the reading skills of nearly all pupils develop soundly over time. Teachers provide a range of appropriate opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy, digital and numeracy skills across the areas of learning and experience. For example, they provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to write at length in different contexts. Through these opportunities, Year 2 pupils, for example, write a purposeful report to explain why people should take care of the world, while Year 4 pupils write a detailed description of the functions of the organs of the body.

Where teaching is at its best, the presentations of many lessons are lively and stimulating and engage most pupils' interest effectively. Most teachers use a range of probing questioning methods, which build on pupils' previous learning and develop their thinking skills effectively. They give pupils purposeful feedback in lessons, which helps them to know what the next steps are in their learning. Leaders have recently identified the need to improve teachers' written feedback to support pupils to know what the next steps are when improving their work. Most teachers provide work that challenges pupils' appropriately. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers do not provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to make choices about how they present their work and the resources they need to use. This hinders pupils' ability to develop their independent learning skills.

The youngest pupils benefit from purposeful experiences in the school's outdoor areas. For example, pupils in the reception class take advantage of purposeful opportunities to develop their oral and number skills when fishing for spiders in the water tub. However, at times, teachers over-direct pupils in the learning areas. As a result, this limits pupils' ability to develop their creative skills with increasing independence.

Many teachers plan stimulating educational visits to enrich and reinforce learning. For example, the youngest pupils visit a local farm and go on a walk in the community, which develops their understanding of their '*cynefin*', or local area, effectively. The oldest pupils deepen their understanding of Wales successfully by visiting the Senedd in Cardiff. Teachers provide exciting opportunities for pupils to work with local artists and drama companies, for example as the oldest pupils create a dance when performing the 'Betty Campbell' show.

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

The school is an inclusive and caring community that promotes robust values, namely Respect, Care and Welshness. There is a close working relationship between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves. This leads to creating a caring community with a friendly and warm ethos. Teachers and assistants know the pupils well and respond purposefully to their emotional and social needs. Staff's positive attitudes support pupils to settle quickly and contribute well to school life. This reinforces pupils' satisfaction and well-being well and encourage them to foster resilient attitudes to learning.

Staff provide purposefully to meet the well-being needs of nearly all pupils. The morning arrangement where pupils share their feelings with teachers works well to

identify specific pupils. Through the use of the '*Hafan*' and the calming corners in the classrooms, staff provide opportunities for pupils to reflect quietly before resuming their learning later.

Provision for pupils with ALN is sound. The ALN co-ordinator (ALNCo) and assistant are extremely passionate about their responsibilities in supporting pupils. Under the skilled guidance of the ALNCo, staff collect useful information about pupils' progress and analyse this information effectively. As a result, they identify pupils who need additional support quickly and provide a range of support programmes that meet their specific needs successfully. Staff ensure that all pupils with ALN have specific targets that are reviewed and evaluated regularly. They include parents purposefully in discussions about their children's progress.

Staff use the school's outdoor areas effectively to develop pupils' thinking skills and their ability to solve problems. For example, the forest is used purposefully to develop pupils' understanding of sustainability and nature. Pupils in the reception class enjoy collecting leaves and nuts as part of their counting work. The oldest pupils enjoy taking part in outdoor activities, for example when calculating the length and perimeter of different objects on the school playground.

One of the school's strengths is the way in which staff promote and develop pupils' understanding of their Welsh identity, heritage and culture. Pupils take advantage of beneficial opportunities to celebrate their Welshness and feel that they belong to the local community. For example, the youngest pupils sing in a local residential home, while the oldest pupils take part in a special Remembrance Day service with other schools in the catchment area.

Presentations in the morning assemblies are effective in developing pupils' understanding of how diverse society is today, for example when considering that families can be different. Through collective worship sessions, staff foster shared values, such as honesty, fairness and justice regularly which, in turn, helps pupils to understand the needs and rights of others.

The school provides opportunities that encourage pupils to take part in a range of sports and leisure activities, for example in sports tournaments such as rugby, football and netball. These contribute firmly to developing pupils to become healthy and confident individuals. The school's arrangements for preparing pupils for the world of work are effective; for example, staff organise a week of activities and this succeeds well in motivating pupils to raise their aspirations for the future.

Staff have a sound understanding of safeguarding processes and leaders respond appropriately to any individual cases, by working effectively with other agencies. The school's processes for ensuring pupils' punctuality and regular attendance are sound.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher has a clear vision based on developing pupils' well-being in an inclusive and friendly environment. The headteacher is supported effectively by other leaders who share this vision successfully with pupils, staff, governors and parents.



Leaders ensure that there is a strong sense of teamwork across the school. They have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Staff are responsible for specific aspects of the school's work and contribute purposefully to ensuring that most pupils, including those with additional needs and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, make sound progress in their skills over time.

The headteacher and leaders have a sound understanding of the main strengths and areas for improvement. They use a wide range of purposeful activities to evaluate teaching and learning, which include monitoring plans, scrutinising pupils' work and observing lessons. This has been effective in identifying the need to improve aspects of pupils' learning, which includes their reading skills following the pandemic. As a result, leaders have introduced methods to develop reading skills across the school, which have had an extremely positive effect on nearly all pupils' standards of reading.

The governing body receives appropriate reports from the headteacher each term, which focus on progress against the improvement priorities. Within their termly meetings, they challenge some elements of the reports by asking purposeful questions relating to standards and provision to support pupils to make progress in their skills. Leaders use the pupil development grant effectively, for example to support pupils who are affected by poverty to support them to gain full access to learning experiences. Members of the governing body visit the school regularly; for example, they have recently visited classes, paying attention to provision for improving pupils' skills. However, the governing body does not participate effectively enough in the school's self-evaluation processes. As a result, it does not have a comprehensive enough understanding of all strengths and areas for improvement.

The headteacher has created a positive culture to promote and support the professional learning of all staff. All teachers are given regular opportunities to attend courses and training that link directly to their individual needs and the school's improvement priorities. All staff share ideas and best practices with each other purposefully. Recently, staff have shared best teaching practices after trialling approaches to improve pupils' thinking skills. The headteacher has high expectations for her own performance and that of the staff. Staff have appropriate improvement targets that link closely to the areas for improvement and their professional development priorities.

Leaders have developed a sound culture of safeguarding across the school. The governing body ensures that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking; for example, pupils are encouraged to eat fruit and drink water during the day.

Leaders forge productive relationships with families and the wider school community. Pupils recently held a 'Criw Cymraeg' coffee morning to promote speaking Welsh among parents and members of the community. The school uses a range of networks to communicate regularly with parents. As a result, parents feel comfortable raising any issues that may affect their child's learning and well-being.

## Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body/members of the management committee through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior, middle leaders, and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of lessons, including learning support groups and the specialist resource base (where appropriate), and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups (where appropriate) and in outdoor areas
- visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning (where appropriate)
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales>)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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