



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

A report on

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Santes Tudful

**Pantyyfyn Road
Twynyrodyn
Merthyr Tydfil
CF47 0HU**

Date of inspection: November 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Santes Tudful

Name of provider	Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Santes Tudful
Local authority	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	433
Pupils of statutory school age	326
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	56
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 23.7%)</i>	11.7%
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 13.2%)</i>	3.4%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	2.8%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	02/01/2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	06/06/2016
Start date of inspection	20/11/2023

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 Gymraeg Santes Tudful, which includes nursery provision at the Gurnos site, is a successful learning community that celebrates the progress and achievement of all pupils highly effectively. It has an inclusive and caring ethos. The headteacher and deputy headteacher, with the intelligent support of the governing body, provide clear and compelling leadership and respect the efforts of everyone who contributes to the well-rounded education of pupils.

The school's ethos is based firmly on a shared vision, namely inspiring, learning and celebrating. As a result, most pupils show very strong attitudes to learning, care for others and take pride in their Welshness, their school and their local area.

There are excellent relationships between staff and pupils. Staff have high expectations for all pupils in terms of effort, achievement and behaviour and they support them to develop their skills successfully. They set clear learning objectives and present stimulating activities, giving purposeful consideration to pupils' ideas. They ignite the youngest pupils' curiosity and use various questioning methods effectively to extend pupils' understanding and develop their ability to solve problems.

Most pupils show progress in their skills from their starting points, including those with additional learning needs. However, pupils' independent Welsh writing skills are not developing well enough.

Staff provide valuable support and experiences to promote pupils' well-being, for example so that they can take part in exciting and purposeful outdoor activities. These opportunities have a positive effect on pupils' attitudes and ability to apply themselves fully to their learning.

Building valuable partnerships with parents and the wider community is a clear priority. For example, the school welcomes parents and carers to the 'Reading Cafes', which share important information with them and promote and support their ability to help their children at home. This is a significant strength, which has a positive effect on pupils and their families.

Recommendations

R1 Develop pupils' independent Welsh writing skills

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 providing highly effective experiences for pupils to develop skills outdoors, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Learning

Many pupils begin their time at the school with skills that are lower than expected for their age. Almost without exception, pupils are unable to speak Welsh on entry to the nursery classes. Across the school, pupils recall their previous learning confidently and, by the top of the school, they develop as mature learners who understand how they learn best. Most pupils, including those who are eligible for free school meals and those with ALN (additional learning needs), make sound progress from their starting points.

From a young age, most pupils listen attentively and succeed in applying their oral skills to new situations both inside and outside the classroom. As pupils move through the school, most develop their listening and speaking skills soundly and show a willingness to talk about their tasks and learning experiences by using purposeful language. They extend their sentences confidently, for example by using '*oherwydd*' ('because') to provide a more detailed response. Many pupils develop their ability to speak Welsh naturally while working and playing with their peers.

Many of the youngest pupils develop early reading skills appropriately through purposeful activities and with support that enables them to recognise letters and build simple words. By Year 2, many read with suitable expression and use a variety of methods to read unfamiliar words. They correct themselves with increasing confidence and develop their skills in reading for a purpose effectively by reading a prepared e-mail and recognising the different features. At the top of the school, many read with a good level of accuracy. They find information from unfamiliar text confidently. A majority read with expression, consider the reader and speak enthusiastically about their favourite authors and books, giving reasons for their choices.

Most of the youngest pupils develop their fine motor skills soundly before moving to making marks purposefully, for example by using natural materials in the areas. This encourages them to develop early writing skills. By Year 2, many of them write a range of simple sentences and develop their ideas effectively with increasing accuracy. In the older pupils' classes, many begin to vary their vocabulary and sentence patterns in their work. They write for a purpose across the areas in a wide range of styles, which include a storyboard of the legend of Gelert and poems about the Aberfan disaster, while following a consistent structure. However, the use of ready-made frameworks restricts their work too much and their independent writing skills in Welsh have not developed well enough.

Most pupils' mathematics and numeracy skills develop well. The youngest pupils gain confidence and succeed in understanding the value of simple numbers as they discuss the features of the 'Number of the Day'. They build on these skills

consistently and, by Year 3, pupils estimate their answers skilfully before adding 3-digit numbers. Older pupils show increasing proficiency when selecting and using the most suitable method to solve a range of calculations. They explain and justify their choices confidently. On the whole, pupils apply their number skills purposefully in their work across the curriculum, for example as they recall their understanding of ratios to create new food for an astronaut's journey to space.

Across the school, pupils make sound progress in developing a good range of digital skills. The youngest pupils begin to handle data successfully, creating pictograms and then block charts by using dedicated software. Most use an art package skilfully, for example to create pictures of flowers emulating the style of David Hockney. Most pupils apply their speaking skills particularly well through their digital activities. Year 2 pupils record their peers conveying the story of the nativity in a puppet theatre successfully. Year 4 pupils use green screen technology effectively to create a video about the effects of climate change, and older pupils describe a popular film, weaving video clips together appropriately.

Most pupils develop their creative skills successfully. The youngest pupils create shapes by using natural materials such as twigs and leaves from the school field. They enjoy creating musical instruments in the creative areas in the classrooms. The oldest pupils develop their skills skilfully by creating a coat of arms for the school with pottery and creative impressive 'Behind the curtain' portraits.

Most pupils' physical skills develop soundly as a result of a variety of purposeful experiences. The youngest pupils dedicate themselves enthusiastically to physical activities in the outdoor area, including cycling and taking part in physical exercise sessions. Older pupils develop their physical skills by taking part in a range of physical activities, such as practising and playing a netball game and benefitting from stimulating outdoor experiences. Many attend a variety of after-school sports and dance clubs, which has a positive effect on their well-being and attitudes towards the importance of keeping fit.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Across the school, pupils' pride in their school is completely evident, with a strong sense of belonging to one family. They treat each other and adults with respect, courtesy and kindness, for example by holding doors and greeting them with a smile. This contributes to the school's friendly and warm ethos. As a result, they develop to become ethical and informed citizens. Nearly all pupils feel that they are treated fairly and trust the staff.

Nearly all pupils behave excellently during their activities, while working independently and playing with their friends during breaktimes and lunchtimes. As they move around the school, nearly everyone is organised and sensible, and they show self-control. Most pupils are engaged fully in their learning and show positive attitudes towards new work. They respond positively to encouragement and advice from staff during learning sessions.

Staff promote positive attitudes towards undertaking new experiences purposefully. As a result, many pupils succeed in persevering and are not afraid to take risks or try something new. The pupil's voice is given a prominent place in the school's life and

work, which leads to a high level of motivation to complete tasks enthusiastically. Most pupils develop resilience successfully. This is done through the purposeful use of support resources, such as murals, and specific methods such as 'ask three before me', which is a method to prompt pupils to search for responses to problems themselves first.

Pupils begin to show a level of independence in the nursery and reception classes as they develop curiosity towards their learning. This aspect is developed further as pupils move through the school.

Pupils represent their peers purposefully on different councils and groups and take their duties seriously. Good examples of this include their commitment to running the fruit shop, dealing with money, and setting various privileges for an extremely popular reward method across all classes.

Pupils learn about their rights in fun activities in the classes and the school ambassadors present a specific right each month in assemblies. Year 3 pupils create an attractive website which includes pages to promote the right to education and the right to be healthy. As a result, most pupils have a sound understanding of children's rights.

Most pupils make highly effective use of the outdoor area. This ensures opportunities for pupils to develop their skills across the curriculum in a very valuable and effective manner. During sessions, most pupils develop to become ambitious and skilful learners who are eager to learn.

Most pupils feel safe on the school site. The oldest ones help the youngest pupils to walk to their classes. They have a very sound awareness of how to keep themselves safe online. For example, they understand how to keep their passwords secret.

Teaching and learning experiences

Teachers plan together effectively to ensure that all pupils have valuable experiences that enrich their thorough knowledge and recognition of the local area and beyond. In the youngest classes, foundation learning principles are embedded firmly. Nearly all activities in the areas develop pupils' independence skilfully, including the nursery provision at the Gurnos site.

As pupils move through the school, the learning experiences that are planned are interesting and suitable for their age and ability. Activities are also flexible and teachers adapt experiences to include pupils' responses at the beginning of a theme and during learning sessions. Inclusive plans promote a fair chance for all pupils to benefit from valuable experiences, including pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who have ALN. Welshness is one of the school's important priorities, which is clear to all staff and pupils. As a result, pupils are proud of their language, their roots and their heritage. When studying the theme '*Perthyn*' ('Belonging'), there are valuable opportunities for pupils to study elements of culture and learn about influential characters and notable places in the Merthyr area. Provision for developing Welsh communication skills in formal and informal learning activities is purposeful.

Teachers provide clear and effective guidance during '*Teithiau Tudful*' tasks and provide purposefully to develop pupils' skills. Provision supports pupils to use and apply their skills regularly and at an appropriate level across the curriculum. Staff ensure consistency by working together, by using whole-school planning methods effectively to ensure that there are no gaps in provision. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh writing skills independently.

Teaching and learning experiences place a clear priority on presenting a purposeful curriculum in a stimulating manner. Information about pupils is used effectively to track their progress according to the outcomes of the curriculum to guide the next steps in their learning. All staff place an emphasis on assessing pupils' progress during sessions, including responding to their work both orally and in writing. There are purposeful opportunities for pupils to consider their learning at the 'evaluation stations' and by using expectations to complete tasks successfully. As a result, most pupils are happy to respond to staff's comments to check and improve their work confidently.

Staff motivate pupils successfully and, as a result, most concentrate for extended periods and develop their ability to work independently from an early age. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils and encourage respect and courtesy from them. Teachers and assistants encourage pupils' positive behaviour extremely effectively and treat all pupils equally and with appropriate respect. A digital reward method is used purposefully to celebrate success. As a result, nearly all pupils have healthy attitudes to learning.

Pupils are supported extremely effectively by a skilful team of teaching assistants who encourage pupils to learn effectively, particularly in the outdoor area. Pupils have access to stimulating resources that promote linguistic and number skills and reinforce learning effectively. Staff make very purposeful use of the wider outdoor areas to promote learning. Pupils learn about their natural environment while developing their skills. Outdoor activities promote pupils' physical skills and well-being in a highly purposeful manner. A good example of this is an opportunity for pupils to use a co-ordinate map and compass to find specific places around the school grounds.

Staff use educational visits highly effectively to develop pupils' understanding of a specific area of learning, for example by visiting Aberfan as an inspiration for composing English poems about the disaster that occurred there. Teachers provide exciting opportunities for pupils to study and emulate the artwork of famous artists. Older pupils benefit from attending residential trips to promote the use of the Welsh language and learn about the geography of north Wales.

Care, support and guidance

The school has an inclusive and caring feel. There are excellent working relationships between all staff and pupils. Staff treat pupils with respect and set high expectations in terms of promoting courtesy. They promote positive behaviour successfully by following the '*Ffordd Santes Tudful*' code of conduct. As a result, nearly all pupils' behaviour is excellent.

Staff provide a wide range of support programmes to support the literacy and numeracy skills of groups of pupils. They are fun, multi-sensory, energetic sessions that succeed in capturing pupils' imagination. For example, staff provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to practise spelling the words of the week by placing pegs in the correct order or using their fingers to write in flour.

The school provides effectively for pupils with ALN. The ALN co-ordinator (ALNCo) has a sound understanding of the needs of individual pupils and organises support for them successfully, by working purposefully with external agencies, where appropriate. The ALNCo provides purposeful training for staff. These arrangements ensure that the school responds effectively to the requirements of the additional learning needs act and tribunal arrangements. Individuals' needs review meetings are held in an inclusive manner, which includes clear input from the pupil.

Pupils' emotional well-being is supported effectively in lessons, for example when discussing the effect of bullying and how pupils can help their peers when bullying occurs. Purposeful provision is also provided which supports the well-being of small groups of pupils. The 'Cwtsh' is a welcoming place that provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop social skills while following specific programmes.

The school has comprehensive arrangements for tracking pupils' progress. These include analysing the progress of individuals in terms of their reading and numeracy skills to identify the need to provide additional support at an early stage. They also track the progress of pupils who receive support through specific programmes carefully and are beginning to analyse this information to self-evaluate provision thoroughly.

The school provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to learn about keeping healthy through their curricular work. For example, Year 4 pupils create a website to explain what health and well-being are, which introduces methods for looking after our own well-being, such as going for a walk, cooking or listening to music. They are given purposeful opportunities to learn about staying safe online, for example knowing about the importance of not following unknown links and logging out before leaving a laptop.

The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to use their imagination and engage in the creative arts through extra-curricular studies and exciting visits. Staff organise beneficial opportunities for pupils to compete in team games.

At the top of the school, they have begun to develop provision for 'Relationships and Sexuality Education' by learning about the significance of Pride month and raising pupils' awareness of how people can be different. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about the history of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, including learning about the influence of Betty Campbell in establishing a school in Cardiff and the history of Martin Luther King.

Staff provide suitable opportunities for groups of pupils to take responsibility for aspects of school life, which prepares them to be dedicated citizens. For example, the Digital Wizards run the school radio station enthusiastically. Beneficial opportunities are provided for pupils to learn about their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, for example as Year 6 pupils

investigate the right to have access to water and food. They provide very valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about the world of work during the annual skills fortnight. This includes presentations and workshops with a number of guests; for example, holding carpentry sessions, raising awareness of how to maintain cars and learning about the kind of jobs that are available in a hospital.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding that responds to the requirements. Staff receive suitable safeguarding training regularly. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to support pupils and families, where necessary. The school has robust processes for promoting attendance. Leaders analyse data appropriately and work closely with education welfare officers, where necessary.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is a strong and inspiring leader. She has a clear vision based on providing the best opportunities for all pupils within a happy learning community, where everyone's voice and opinion is important. This vision has been shared successfully with pupils, staff and parents, namely to inspire, learn and celebrate. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have very high expectations of themselves and the staff and aspire for all pupils to make strong progress in their skills while enjoying their learning experiences. As a result, an atmosphere of curiosity and excitement permeates the school. Leaders promote a culture of safeguarding effectively and keeping children safe is a clear priority. As a result, pupils feel safe and comfortable in their work and play.

The headteacher is supported by an effective deputy headteacher and a team of dedicated and passionate staff who are tireless advocates for pupils. They work conscientiously to reach their shared aim of providing a rich curriculum that inspires and engages all pupils. There are suitable arrangements for managing staff performance and there is a clear link between their development targets and the school's improvement priorities. All of this is supported by valuable professional learning opportunities and activities for all members of staff. For example, teaching staff work together effectively within the school to improve the effect of assessment on pupils' standards and progress. Outside the school, staff develop valuable resources with local schools to promote behaviour. This has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes and the respect they show towards their learning, themselves and their peers.

Leaders have established robust arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the school's work. Leaders, staff and pupils use a range of first-hand evidence purposefully to plan the school's development steps. They analyse evidence purposefully and, as a result, leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to be improved. They draw up detailed improvement plans that focus intelligently on the areas for development, in addition to addressing national improvement priorities, for example by developing a whole-school approach to implementing the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales and reducing the impact of poverty on pupils' attainment. Leaders ensure that there are comprehensive arrangements for monitoring progress against the priorities regularly and these arrangements include all members of staff.

Governors are very supportive of the school and have a good understanding of its work and its community. They undertake a purposeful range of monitoring activities, for example by scrutinising work and conducting site safety inspections. As a result, they have a thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They use this information effectively to challenge leaders about pupils' standards, progress and well-being. Governors work closely with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to ensure the most appropriate use of resources, including financial resources. They use the pupil development grant carefully to provide programmes that support the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and emotional skills. Governors ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Building valuable partnerships with parents and the wider community is a clear priority. This is a significant strength which has a positive effect on pupils and their families. For example, the school welcomes parents and carers to the 'Reading Cafes', which are an opportunity to share important information and promote and support their ability to help their children at home. Pupils are who part of the 'Digital Wizards' group also visit a local home for the elderly. There, they demonstrate their digital skills as they help the residents with how to use a digital device to complete their online shopping.

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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