

A report on
Bryntirion Comprehensive School

**Merlin Crescent
Cefn Glas
CF31 4QR**

Date of inspection: March 2025

by

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

About Bryntirion Comprehensive School

Name of provider	Bryntirion Comprehensive School
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	English medium
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	None
Number of pupils on roll	1223
Pupils of statutory school age	1043
Number in sixth form	178
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 21.1%)	16.8%
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 11.2%)	3.0%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.9%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	1.3%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/10/2016
Start date of inspection	31/03/2025

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.

Summary

A notable strength of Ysgol Gyfun Bryntirion Comprehensive School is the positive working relationships between staff and pupils. The school is a caring and inclusive community, which supports both pupils and staff. As a result, most pupils behave very well and treat their peers, staff and visitors with respect and care. Leaders have created a sound culture of safeguarding and, as a result, many pupils feel safe at school and that they have a trusted adult whom they could turn to if they have any concern.

The school has a clear vision for its curriculum and has prioritised well the development of teaching as part of these developments. There is a wide range of courses available at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form and pupils are provided with useful advice and guidance on the next steps at transition points. The school's personal and social education provision is a particular strength. This includes a health and well-being curriculum, which is adapted according to the needs of pupils, and strong opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills. There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities and sixth form pupils contribute well to the life of the school. However, the current Year 9 curriculum model does not allow enough depth or continuity of learning in a minority of subjects.

The senior team provides strong leadership. There are clear lines of accountability and staff and leaders are supported well to carry out their roles. They are held to account well for the quality of the provision and pupil outcomes in their areas of responsibility. Leaders know the school well and plan effectively for improvement.

In many lessons, teaching is effective. In these instances, teachers plan challenging activities, which engage pupils well and ensure that they make secure progress in their learning. There are valuable opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to develop their skills. In a minority of lessons highly effective teaching leads to pupils making strong progress. Pupils in the sixth form are mature and show positive attitudes to learning. In the lessons observed during the inspection, pupils in the sixth form made good progress.

Pupils with additional learning needs, including those at the specialist resource base (SRB), are supported well in both their mainstream classes and through 'The Hive' provision, which is highly appreciated by both pupils and parents. Pastoral care is a strength of the school and ensures that, in most instances, pupils are ready to learn. Attendance rates are increasing and compare favourably with those at similar schools, although the attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals requires improvement.

Recommendations

We have made two recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Improve the attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals
- R2 Refine curriculum arrangements in Year 9 to ensure that there is continuity and depth of learning in all subjects

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 its health and well-being curriculum and its provision for the personal and social development of pupils, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Teaching and learning

At Ysgol Gyfun Bryntirion Comprehensive School, leaders focus closely on developing consistently effective teaching. As a result, many pupils, including those with ALN, recall prior learning well, apply their knowledge confidently in new contexts and make secure progress in their learning.

Nearly all teachers build positive and purposeful working environments with their pupils and have sound subject knowledge. Most have well-established classroom routines. In many lessons, where pupils make secure progress in their learning, teachers:

- have high expectations
- plan their lessons suitably to build on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding
- explain and demonstrate clearly
- provide regular opportunities for pupils to approach tasks independently before sharing and collaborating with others to enhance their understanding
- offer engaging activities that support pupils to consolidate their learning and make further progress
- ensure an effective pace of learning

- use a range of questioning approaches to assess understanding and extend pupils' responses

As a result of effective teaching, many pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They engage well in lessons, participate willingly in discussions, settle quickly to work and maintain their concentration well.

In a minority of lessons, pupils make significant progress. In these lessons, teachers plan meticulously to meet pupils' needs, pre-empt any misconceptions and adjust their teaching skilfully in light of pupils' progress. They provide engaging and meaningful learning contexts, model tasks highly effectively with clear exemplification, and monitor and probe pupils' responses thoroughly to extend their knowledge, understanding and thinking.

In a few lessons, pupils' progress is limited; they lose concentration or become passive. This is because teachers do not explain tasks clearly before moving on, talk too much, or do not manage a few pupils' engagement well enough.

Many teachers use a range of approaches to monitor pupils' learning and provide helpful feedback to help them improve their work. Where this is effective, teachers use this information well to inform the next steps for learning and teaching. Many teachers use success criteria or written feedback to support pupils to review and reflect on their knowledge and understanding and plan their next steps. However, the quality and impact of these approaches is inconsistent. Pupils generally respond well when this feedback is precise and provides clear guidance on what and how to improve their work, and teachers ensure that pupils have meaningful opportunities to make improvements.

Sixth form pupils are mature, have positive attitudes to learning and engage purposefully with the activities set in the lessons. They collaborate effectively with their peers and show resilience when faced with challenging work. These pupils contribute well to classroom discussions, offering extended contributions and explaining their thinking clearly. They show good recall of prior learning and apply it well in new contexts. For example, they incorporate economic factors when considering the advantages and disadvantages of a minimum wage policy. In the lessons seen during the inspection, pupils in the sixth form made good progress in their learning.

Literacy skills

The school's literacy provision across the curriculum supports the development of pupils' literacy skills effectively. They have purposeful opportunities to develop their speaking

and listening, reading and writing skills in meaningful contexts, although in a few instances potential opportunities are not exploited well enough.

Speaking and listening

Most pupils listen attentively and with respect to each other and adults. Many engage willingly in class discussions and respond appropriately to questions, explaining their views clearly and supporting their points sensibly, such as when explaining whether or not teenagers know more about the world than adults. A few are confident, articulate speakers who provide sophisticated and extended responses when, for example, discussing same-sex marriage. Many pupils offer full sentence verbal responses, have an appropriate vocabulary and use subject terminology suitably. A few pupils offer only very brief responses or are reluctant to speak.

Reading

The school places a strong focus on developing the reading skills of pupils and their enjoyment of reading. Leaders collect and track a broad range of evidence to gain an accurate picture of pupils' reading abilities. They use this to identify and provide purposeful interventions for pupils in need of additional support.

Spotlight: Bryntirion book week

To promote enjoyment in reading and encourage a love of books, the school holds an annual Bryntirion book week. This involves a range of activities involving all pupils and staff. These events include writing and poetry workshops for pupils run by authors, journalists and poets, a readathon, a free book swap and a book review competition. During this week, there is a ten-minute shared reading activity at the beginning of each lesson, where teachers model reading aloud. This is based on an engaging text that encourages pupils to be curious and excited to find out what happens next. Each book week is based on a theme. This year, the theme was careers linked to reading and studying English.

When reading, many pupils locate or extract information efficiently. They understand and infer meaning appropriately on the whole, and a majority do so confidently. Many pupils analyse texts, including poems, music, artwork and historical sources suitably, supporting their points with evidence such as quotations from texts. A minority of pupils struggle to analyse the effect of language and writing techniques. Many annotate texts appropriately, highlighting suitable details but a few pupils tend to annotate indiscriminately. Many pupils make suitable observations regarding the reliability and usefulness of texts and

synthesise information from different sources appropriately, but the tasks or texts are not always suitably challenging.

Writing

Pupils have meaningful opportunities to write for a range of purposes and audiences across the curriculum. Scaffolding, such as structure strips, support pupils effectively to develop their writing skills. Generally, this is removed suitably as pupils progress, which helps many to develop well as independent writers.

Many pupils structure their written work logically and use paragraphs suitably. The content of many pupils' written work is clear and sensible. They have a secure and varied vocabulary and use subject terminology appropriately. They also utilise the ambitious vocabulary that is introduced to them in their lessons and vary sentence types confidently. Many pupils endeavour to use language for effect and a majority also use literary techniques well in their writing. They write at length competently in a variety of forms and with a suitable understanding of audience and purpose. A few pupils write particularly confidently and thoughtfully, using a broad and rich vocabulary, for example when writing a letter to the Welsh Government arguing that the Holocaust should be a compulsory aspect of the curriculum. A few pupils offer only brief, underdeveloped written responses and do not use paragraphs accurately.

Overall, the majority of pupils write with generally appropriate control and technical accuracy. A minority of pupils frequently misspell words and make punctuation and grammar errors. A very few pupils have weak handwriting.

Welsh skills

The school supports pupils effectively to develop their Welsh language skills, and bilingualism is rapidly becoming an integral part of 'Be Bryntirion' and 'Tîm Bryntirion'. As a result, most pupils enjoy participating in Welsh lessons and are showing positive attitudes towards improving their skills. When given the opportunity to develop their Welsh literacy skills, many pronounce Welsh words clearly and accurately and use retrieval strategies effectively to locate facts to answer questions. A few pupils converse independently without too much support from sentence builders and, as a result construct more complex responses, for example when talking about Welsh music or writing about their local area. Many pupils write short, accurate pieces in Welsh, and translate sentences correctly. A few pupils use verbs, and tenses effectively and use mutations accurately. However, in general there is an over-reliance on sentence builders and lack of exposure to the spoken language.

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to further develop their knowledge of the Welsh language and culture outside of Welsh lessons, for example through the informative bilingual magazine 'Y Bryn', and residential visits to Llangrannog, and school eisteddfod. An important recent development is the pupil led 'Cryw Cymraeg', which promotes the Welsh language by encouraging more pupils to speak Welsh through various activities, for example the cross curricular day 'Gwyl Calan Gaeaf'.

Numeracy skills

In their mathematics lessons and in relevant subjects across the curriculum, pupils are provided with a wide range of worthwhile opportunities to develop their numeracy skills in relevant contexts. The school has recently strengthened its focus on developing pupils' numerical proficiencies in both mathematics and subjects across the curriculum, and this is a positive feature. Many of the opportunities to develop numeracy are well planned although, in a few instances, opportunities do not provide sufficient challenge for all pupils.

Many pupils have a secure grasp of basic number concepts. They use the four operations and the connections between them suitably. The majority have a sound grasp of fractions, decimals and percentages and apply their understanding of percentages to solve a range of problems in different contexts. Many pupils have a sound understanding of shapes and measures and convert fluently between different metric units. They can calculate the area of compound shapes and use formulae confidently.

Many pupils have suitable data-handling skills. They draw graphs accurately and use them to find patterns, draw conclusions and identify any anomalies in their data. A minority of pupils have strong numeracy skills. They have a well-developed understanding of complex numerical concepts and apply these well to, for example, calculate income tax, interpret histograms and solve quadratic equations. A few pupils have weak basic number skills and struggle to solve numerical problems.

Spotlight 2: The school's provision for the development of pupils' digital skills

Pupils develop their digital skills effectively in information and communication technology (ICT), in computing lessons, and in a range of subjects across the curriculum. These include well-planned opportunities in 'Dysgu Byw' lessons, personal and social education, skills challenge lessons, and also when completing enterprise challenges. In these instances, pupils:

- build spreadsheets and work with formulae well to carry out a range of analysis tasks such as considering potential over and underspends in budgets under different scenarios.
- explore the advantages and disadvantages of social media and develop a strong understanding of how to keep safe online
- discuss the ethical considerations of representations of sexualised images online and their impact on identity, image, reputation and mental health
- develop websites or use social media platforms effectively to present their ideas, using a range of applications to edit and embed multi-media

Other skills

In general, pupils develop their creativity and their thinking skills well. In their English lessons, pupils produce engaging creative writing pieces, for example when they write the diary entry of a person living during Shakespeare's time. In drama, pupils show a good understanding of the features of gothic theatre and demonstrate this well in their still images, such as in facial expressions and stance. In mathematics, pupils show well-developed thinking skills when applying their understanding of different loci to create a scale diagram design of a garden.

The curriculum

Leaders have a clear vision for their Curriculum for Wales, rooted in the school's values of 'ready, respectful, safe, successful'. The school continuously evaluates and refines its approach to ensure its curriculum develops a range of pupils' skills but is also knowledge rich. There is some variability across the areas of learning and experience in how fully implemented these new approaches are. Curricular arrangements for a minority of subjects in Year 9 do not provide pupils with sufficient depth and continuity of learning. This has a negative impact on pupils' progress in these subjects. Leaders work effectively with partner primary schools to plan progression across areas of learning and to strengthen curricular transition. The school offers a broad range of courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, including a wide selection of general and vocational options.

The school enriches pupils' experiences through visits that complement their learning, such as trips to the First World War battlefields and Auschwitz. It offers a range of valuable extra-curricular activities, including the ancient history focused 'Olympus Challenge', the school show in which 130 pupils are participating and science, drama and debate clubs. Pupils are provided with valuable opportunities to develop their physical skills in their physical education lessons and the extensive range of sporting clubs. As a result, pupils

generally develop their physical endurance, hand-eye co-ordination, agility and strength well.

The school has a comprehensive programme for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, delivered through a research-driven personal and social education curriculum. This programme is refined carefully in response to pupil feedback and the local context, ensuring that it remains relevant. Pupils consider a range of important topics such as rights, challenging stereotypes, exploitation, critical thinking, and the promotion of equality and diversity. Leaders engage well with parents on sensitive issues through regular meetings and information sessions.

The school provides suitable provision for careers and work-related experiences, with initiatives such as the 'My Future, My Choice Challenge', which encourages pupils to explore potential career pathways. Staff also provide valuable opportunities for pupils to engage with their local community. For example, pupils design charity projects to support their local communities, fostering a strong sense of social responsibility.

Well-being, care, support and guidance

Ysgol Bryntirion is a close-knit, warm and welcoming community where pupils feel safe, valued and respected. The vision of the 'Bryntirion way' – Be Ready, Be Respectful, Be Safe, Be Successful, Be Bryntirion' – encourages a culture of respect, well-being and happiness.

Pastoral staff know the pupils well and form purposeful relationships with them and their families. The pastoral team provide beneficial support and interventions to support pupils' well-being. These are tailored to the specific needs of pupils through effective use of year group profiles. The school has fostered productive partnerships with a variety of external agencies, which contribute positively towards this provision.

There is a variety of valuable opportunities to promote pupils' personal and social development. These include many extra-curricular clubs, experiences, visits and assemblies. For example, through the 'Talk Tuesday' programme, pupils explore key issues such as mental health. The 'Health and Wellbeing' curriculum is comprehensive and is adapted when necessary to respond to pupils' views and concerns. For instance, the Student Council has used local data from the South Wales Police and the Junior Start Well Board regarding under-age social media use to design an education programme for fellow pupils.

The pastoral team and other staff work collaboratively to promote and monitor attendance. This includes forensic analysis of a variety of data and information, focused work on groups of learners and effective partnership working with local authority officers. Over the last two years attendance has improved and compares well with that of similar schools, although attendance rates remain lower than pre-pandemic levels. The attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals declined last year but remains above the average for these pupils in similar schools. Rates of persistent absences are lower than those in similar schools.

‘The Bryntirion Way’ and the recently introduced ‘Positive Relationships’ policy provide a clear framework for the promotion of positive behaviour and attitudes. As a result, most pupils behave very well and a culture of mutual respect permeates the school. Leaders analyse behaviour data well to identify trends and types of incidences to plan provision and support individuals and groups of pupils, including those at risk of exclusion. The school has useful mechanisms to track the very few incidents of bullying and discriminatory behaviour. These are used in a timely fashion to address issues through a range of approaches. Most pupils feel that the school deals well with any alleged incidences of bullying and many feel that they are treated fairly.

Pupil leadership is a particularly strong feature of the school. There is a range of strategic groups that enables pupils to have purposeful impact on school improvement. For example, ‘Wellbeing Leaders’ deliver sessions to fellow pupils on mental health that are tailored to the needs of the school community. The pupils’ ‘Learning and Development’ subcommittee and ‘Subject Ambassadors’ have a clear impact on learning and teaching across a range of subject areas. For instance, they organise events in science to engage more pupils in the subject, are designing a school library with the English department to promote literacy and Year 12 pupils lead a mathematics peer mentoring scheme. Pupil leaders recognise the need to share the impact of their work more widely.

There are effective arrangements for pupils, including those with ALN, when they transition to secondary school. This helps them to settle well. As pupils progress through the school, they receive appropriate advice and guidance on their next steps in learning. There is particularly strong provision in Year 11 through individualised pupil, and parents and carers meetings, where advice is given on a range of pathways. This aids pupils’ understanding and raises their aspirations. The developing ‘Bryntirion Alumni’, whereby ex-pupils share their experiences after leaving the school, is a source of inspiration for pupils regarding their vision for their own future.

The ALN team are passionate about providing the best experiences for pupils with ALN and enabling them to achieve their potential. The provision for pupils with ALN is centred around 'The Hive', which is a supportive and purposeful environment that is appreciated by these pupils and their parents. There is a broad range of interventions and provisions to support pupils with ALN, and staff have expertise in particular aspects such as speech and language and dyslexia. This, alongside meaningful working with a variety of external agencies, means that many pupils with ALN, including those in the SRB, are supported well and make sound progress against their targets.

The school is making secure progress against the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (Wales). Individual Development Plans and One Page Profiles contain helpful and often very detailed information about each pupil's needs. Arrangements for annual reviews are appropriate. Leaders provide extensive information, support and training around responding to pupils' social needs and, to a lesser extent, their progress in learning. Leaders use an extensive range of data and information to monitor and track the progress of pupils with ALN. Plans to bring this information together to provide a centralised overview of the provision for and progress of each pupil are at an early stage.

The school has a sound culture of safeguarding. Leaders have appropriate arrangements to keep pupils safe. These include clear processes that are understood well by staff and enable them to respond promptly when concerns arise. As a result, many pupils feel safe and feel they have someone to talk to if they have concerns. Staff receive relevant and timely training on important aspects of safeguarding.

Leading and improving

The headteacher at Bryntirion Comprehensive School provides thoughtful, supportive and strategic leadership. He has implemented a clear, well-understood vision for the school based on its motto "Dysgwn Sut i Fyw – Learning To Live". He has considered carefully the roles and responsibilities of leaders to ensure that they are distributed appropriately and match the skills of individuals. He empowers others to lead their areas of responsibility with confidence whilst ensuring that there are high levels of support and accountability.

Senior leaders have high expectations of both staff and pupils. They work together effectively and hold each other to account robustly to drive improvements. They manage staff performance well and address underperformance appropriately. Senior leaders pay due attention to staff well-being, which contributes to a positive working environment, and have established a sound culture of safeguarding.

Supported by his senior leadership team, the headteacher has established a culture of continuous self-evaluation and improvement. The school has identified a clear set of improvement priorities focused on improving learning, teaching, well-being and leadership. These are understood well by staff at all levels and firmly underpin quality assurance, line management, performance management and professional learning.

The quality assurance process is carefully and strategically planned to ensure that leaders carry out a wide variety of targeted self-evaluation activities that, in general, focus closely on pupil progress, well-being and the effectiveness of teaching. However, in a few instances, these activities focus too much on compliance with policies and the completion of actions. This reduces the precision with which leaders can plan for and secure specific improvements.

Leaders have taken effective steps to address national priorities such as the promotion of the Welsh language, the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and mitigating the impact of poverty. They have developed a suitably clear vision for their Curriculum for Wales, based on effective teaching and authentic learning experiences to provide pupils with the necessary skills for later life.

Governors are committed supporters of the school's work. The governing body provides some helpful challenge to senior leaders. However, it does not currently evaluate its own effectiveness or the impact it has on the work of the school.

Senior leaders manage the school budget well, supported by the effective leadership of the business manager. There are clear processes in place for financial planning and spending is monitored diligently. The school makes appropriate use of the pupil development grant and other funding to support vulnerable pupils. For example, the school supports pupils impacted by poverty by providing food parcels, uniform and devices as well as access to trips and other extra-curricular activities. Leaders evaluate the use of relevant funding carefully to ensure it meets the needs of identified pupils.

Leadership has had a positive impact on many important aspects of the school's work, including the quality of teaching.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for site management give cause for concern and have been brought to the attention of the local authority.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

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 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 and middle leaders (where appropriate) 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, where appropriate
- visit a broad sample of lessons, including learning support groups 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 and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- 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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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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