![Estyn logo — Dros ddysgwyr, dros Gymru / For learners, for Wales]

A report on

Llangatwg Community School

Main Road
Cadoxton
Neath
SA10 8DB

Date of inspection: May 2025

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Llangatwg Community School

Name of provider	Llangatwg Community School
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	787
Pupils of statutory school age	786
Number in sixth form	
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%)	25.5%
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%)	10.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	1.4%
Date of headteacher appointment	28/04/2025
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	09/04/2018
Start date of inspection	19/05/2025

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

Llangatwg Community School is a supportive school where staff place a strong emphasis on supporting the well-being of pupils. Pupils are friendly and welcoming to visitors. Many behave well in lessons and around the school and most feel free from bullying and know to whom to turn should they need help. The provision for the well-being, care, support and guidance of pupils is comprehensive. In particular, pastoral transition arrangements and the provision for careers and the world of work education are strengths. Support for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is also strong. However, despite recent improvements, attendance remains too low and the strategic leadership of this area lacks clarity.

In many lessons, pupils make at least adequate progress and a few of these pupils make strong progress. In these lessons, teachers plan activities that build well on each other to enable pupils to make progress. In a minority of lessons, pupils do not make as much progress as they could and a few of these make limited progress. This is generally due to a lack of challenge and weaknesses in lesson planning.

Leaders have made sound progress in improving the school's provision to develop pupils' numeracy and reading skills, and are strengthening the provision to develop other skills appropriately. The provision to develop pupils' numeracy skills in mathematics lessons is a particular strength. The school's curriculum is suitably broad and balanced and has been adapted helpfully to meet the needs of specific groups of pupils.

There is a palpable sense of teamwork among staff, who are eager to continue to improve the work of the school. In the very short time she has been in post, the new headteacher has gained the respect of the school community. She has accurately identified the main strengths and areas of improvement and has a clear vision for the school's future. She is supported by a dedicated team of leaders. The school has provided leadership opportunities for a wide range of staff, but current roles and responsibilities lack clarity, which has resulted in a lack of strategic leadership in a few areas.

Overall, leaders at all levels evaluate the impact of their work generally accurately. Leaders have been successful in improving important aspects of the school's work such as the culture of safeguarding, staff morale, and the provision to support pupils' numeracy and reading skills. However, improvement planning is not always sufficiently precise or strategic. In these cases, leadership has not been effective enough in improving aspects such as teaching in a minority of instances and whole-school attendance.

The school uses grant funding effectively to support pupils impacted by poverty and leaders evaluate the spending of the pupil development grant well. However, the school currently has a deficit budget.

Recommendations

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

R1.   Improve teaching and assessment

R2.   Improve attendance

R3.   Improve strategic improvement planning

R4.   Clarify the roles and responsibilities of leaders

What happens next

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

Main findings

Teaching and learning

Most pupils are welcoming and friendly to visitors, and behave well in lessons and around the school. They follow instructions promptly and settle to work quickly. Many engage purposefully in their learning and sustain concentration effectively.

In many lessons, pupils, including those with ALN, make at least adequate progress and a few make strong progress. They develop their knowledge and understanding suitably and recall prior learning appropriately. In these lessons, teachers have secure subject knowledge, are sound language models for pupils and support the development of their understanding of terminology well. They plan activities that build sequentially and logically to support learning, and employ beneficial resources. They provide clear explanations and instructions, and offer useful support when circulating the classroom. These teachers are supportive of pupils and foster positive working relationships with them. In a majority of lessons, the pace of the lesson is well-matched to the pace of the learning and teachers offer helpful examples and models. There is a purposeful atmosphere to these lessons, often as a result of useful classroom routines. Where appropriate, teaching assistants provide beneficial support. In the few particularly strong lessons, teachers support pupils effectively to tackle highly challenging activities and give them valuable opportunities to apply what they have learned independently. They question pupils skilfully and use this information to adapt the level of challenge and pace of learning accordingly.

In a minority of lessons, pupils do not make as much progress as they could due mainly to a lack of challenge. The reasons for this vary, but include teachers:

- not increasing the level of challenge as the lesson progresses
- providing tasks that are too easy
- giving too much help or scaffolding
- planning for activities rather than progress
- not planning for the needs of pupils of different abilities well enough
- not checking pupils' progress carefully enough and adapting the lesson in response

In a few lessons, pupils make limited progress and struggle to recall prior learning. In these cases, the pace of learning is too slow. This is as a result of teachers not planning for progress and the needs of the pupils effectively enough and, in some cases, weak classroom management. A few pupils struggle to maintain concentration and a very few demonstrate negative attitudes to learning. There are gaps and unfinished work in the books of a minority of pupils, and they do not take sufficient pride in the presentation of their work.

Most teachers ask suitable questions to check for understanding and pupils' recall of prior learning. Many give pupils helpful verbal feedback and advice in lessons on how to improve their work. Only a minority, however, ask questions to probe for deeper understanding and to encourage pupils to think for themselves and extend their responses.

In many cases, teachers provide helpful positive written comments and useful advice for improvement to pupils. Some departments have adapted the school's assessment system to suit the needs of their subject successfully, but others have made less progress, leading to a lack of meaningful feedback. Pupils are provided with opportunities to improve their work in response to feedback, but this varies according to subject. In some cases, pupils make purposeful improvements to their work in light of valuable feedback but, in other cases, pupil responses are cursory or there are no opportunities for them to respond.

Skills

Leaders have prioritised the development of pupils' skills in the school improvement plan and have evaluated accurately the strengths and areas for improvement in this area. They have been successful in supporting the development of pupils' reading and numeracy skills, and are developing their provision around writing, oracy and digital skills suitably. There is useful support for pupils with weaker literacy and numeracy skills through a targeted intervention programme, and information regarding these pupils is shared with staff.

Overall, leaders plan effectively for the development of pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. For example, the school has undertaken a helpful audit of Year 7 pupils' reading skills. As a result, teachers have developed a range of reading strategies to support these pupils. Pupils are encouraged to read for pleasure by teachers through, for example, guided reading sessions.

In general, pupils are supported well to develop their reading skills, particularly in their English lessons. Most are able to locate simple information efficiently. Many use terminology suitably when analysing texts and support their points with evidence appropriately. Many infer basic meaning from written and visual texts successfully and a majority use their inference and deduction skills well to understand deeper meaning. A minority of pupils struggle to use advanced reading skills and understand subject specific terminology, and a few produce superficial responses to reading tasks.

Most pupils listen attentively in lessons and many discuss sensibly in pairs and small groups. When supported through effective questioning, many pupils respond well, offering cogent and well-supported answers and using subject specific terminology accurately. However, the development of pupils' oracy skills is hampered by the fact that a majority of teachers do not support pupils to develop and extend their responses sufficiently and tend to ask questions of a limited range of pupils. A few pupils are reluctant to contribute to class discussions and a very few do not listen well enough.

When writing, many pupils structure their written work appropriately, but a few struggle to structure their work coherently and use paragraphs suitably. A majority have an appropriate vocabulary and a few have a broad, rich vocabulary. A few pupils have a limited vocabulary. When given the opportunity, many pupils produce suitable extended writing and write appropriately in a limited range of forms. However, opportunities to write at length and for a broad range of purposes and audiences vary across the curriculum. A few pupils struggle to write at length and tend to produce very short and often unfinished pieces of writing. A majority of pupils produce work that is technically secure on the whole, but a minority make frequent spelling, grammar and punctuation errors. A very few pupils have illegible handwriting.

In mathematics and relevant subjects across the curriculum, there is a suitable range of worthwhile opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their numeracy skills.

A majority of pupils have suitable basic number skills. They successfully use the four rules of number to solve a variety of problems, such as when using exchange rates to convert between different currencies. They work well with fractions, percentages and decimals, such as when they carry out efficiency calculations in science or solve appreciation and depreciation problems in mathematics. A majority of pupils develop their understanding of shapes and measures appropriately. They can calculate perimeter and area of compound shapes and use Pythagoras' Theorem to find the lengths of missing sides in right angled triangles. When given the opportunity, pupils generally plot graphs accurately, although, in a few instances, opportunities for pupils to develop their data handling skills do not offer a sufficiently high level of challenge. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress in this aspect of numeracy.

A few pupils have weak numeracy skills. They struggle to solve problems set in real-life contexts.

Pupils develop their digital skills suitably within their information and communication technology lessons (ICT). For example, they are given opportunities to create their own music using coding techniques. A range of appropriate opportunities are being developed across the curriculum to further develop their digital skills. For instance, pupils in the 'e-sports group' promote digital skills across the school and recently won a national competition.

Pupils develop their creative, thinking and physical skills through a range of appropriate opportunities. For example, in technology lessons pupils use their creative skills to plan and produce original products such as organisers and mobile phone holders. In mathematics in particular, pupils develop their thinking skills well through the variety of experiences offered by the department. Many teachers in the department offer good quality opportunities for pupils to think, to make connections between different areas of maths, to make connections to real-life and to apply their knowledge and skills to solve problems. Pupils develop their physical skills in construction lessons by undertaking bricklaying activities and refine their skills following demonstrations from their teacher. Pupils develop appropriate catching and ball striking skills for rounders in their physical education lessons.

Cymraeg

A majority of pupils make broadly adequate progress in their Welsh lessons on the whole, but a few make limited progress. A majority of pupils pronounce Welsh words clearly and correctly when speaking and, when given sentence structures and patterns, many answer questions using full sentences. Overall, however, pupils have too few opportunities to hear spoken Welsh or to practise speaking Welsh. Many read short and basic Welsh texts suitably and are successful in gathering information from texts. A majority produce short pieces of writing in Welsh using a suitable range of vocabulary. These pupils write fairly accurately, structure their sentences correctly and use paragraphs appropriately. In a few instances, older pupils write confidently in Welsh. In general, however, pupils are over-reliant on vocabulary lists and sentence builders given to them by their teachers.

The school is in the early stages of developing its provision to promote the Welsh language and foster a Welsh ethos across the school. Leaders are developing partnerships with external organisations, including the Urdd and Menter Iaith, to enhance pupils' experiences of Welsh language and culture beyond the classroom. These opportunities include residential visits to Llangrannog and Glan Llyn, as well as participation in events like Eisteddfod yr Urdd Dur a Môr. The 'Criw Cymraeg' plays an active role in promoting the language by organising events on key dates such as 'Diwrnod Santes Dwynwen' and 'Dydd Miwsig Cymru'.

Curriculum

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, which meets the needs of nearly all pupils. There is a wide range of subject choices in Key Stage 4, including appropriate vocational options such as construction, and hospitality and catering. The curriculum is adapted appropriately to meet the needs of specific groups of vulnerable pupils such as those who attend 'Dosbarth Tyfu' in Years 7 and 8 and older pupils in 'Y Bont' provision.

Leaders have worked with a range of stakeholders, including partner primary schools, to develop a shared vision for their Curriculum for Wales. This curriculum suitably reflects the local context and supports pupils to become ethically informed citizens. Leaders regularly review and evaluate the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of learners and collaborate to develop links between Areas of Learning and Experience.

The school develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness appropriately through personal and social education (PSE) lessons, assemblies and extra-curricular opportunities. For example, in PSE lessons in Years 7-9, a range of age-appropriate topics and themes such as health and hygiene and cyber bullying are explored. Leaders also work effectively with a range of external partners to supplement this provision and use data from pupil surveys to ensure that it reflects their needs. However, pupils in Years 10 and 11 have insufficient opportunities to discuss PSE topics.

Pupils are given a range of opportunities to develop their awareness of diversity. For example, activities have been developed in a range of subjects linked to the theme of 'Belonging'. Pupils benefit from learning about the experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in assemblies, drop-down days and health and well-being sessions, as well as in lessons.

The school provides a wide and engaging range of extra-curricular activities for pupils during the school day and after school. For example, there is a robotics club, university visits, trips abroad such as the recent school exchange to Quebec, and a range of sporting opportunities.

Well-being, care, support and guidance

Llangatwg Community School is a warm, welcoming and nurturing school where staff build strong, meaningful relationships with pupils and care deeply about their individual well-being. The school's motto 'Inspire, Aspire, Succeed' is embraced by the school community.

The Wellbeing and Support Panel (WASP) is used effectively to co-ordinate additional support for pupils and the school has a suitable range of provisions to meet their needs. These include the 'Enfys' centre, which provides a calm and caring environment to support learners with social and emotional issues and 'Y Bont' for pupils who are at risk of exclusion. This has a positive impact on pupils' well-being and social development and enables them to reintegrate into mainstream education. Staff work effectively with a broad range of external agencies to provide beneficial additional support for those pupils who need it.

Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Many arrive promptly but a few pupils are late to lessons, and more so to registration periods. The school has recently introduced its expectations for behaviour and attitudes to learning through the 'Promoting Positive Conduct System', which involves a graduated response to improving behaviour. Although it is in its early stages, this system is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour in lessons. The introduction of the rewards system has also successfully contributed to improving pupil engagement and attendance. However, there is some inconsistency in how well staff apply these systems.

The school is starting to put suitable strategies in place to deal with challenges such as the high number of pupils who transfer into the school during the school year. For instance, pupils who struggle to engage in lessons can attend the 'Paratoi' room, which provides a calm environment to encourage reflection and restoration so that they can return to lessons as soon as possible.

Spotlight: Pastoral transition

Pastoral transition arrangements are well-structured and a notable strength. Primary pupils and their families benefit from a wide range of transition opportunities and effective tailored visits. Additional days are provided for vulnerable pupils and those with additional learning needs. 'Cluster visits,' where Llangatwg staff visit each primary school, play a vital role in supporting the transition process. These visits foster strong relationships among pupils, parents, and staff. They also include valuable initiatives such as bookable appointments with Llangatwg staff for parents or carers and informal coffee afternoons, which provide valuable fora for raising concerns and easing anxieties. Additional transition activities held in Easter and August further strengthen this support. These include an egg hunt and a fayre where parents and carers can access support services. A funded family day out further enhances the transition programme.

There is a well-established culture of safeguarding throughout the school, where all members of staff are aware of their responsibilities. The safeguarding team responds to concerns promptly and diligently. There are strong partnerships with a wide range of external agencies to enhance the support the school provides to pupils. As a result, many pupils feel safe in school and pupils are aware of the safeguarding procedures and relevant staff to approach. The school applies a clear anti-bullying policy and consequently most pupils feel free from bullying, harassment and any abuse.

The school has recently revised and refreshed its approach to improving attendance. There are emerging systems for tracking attendance that have had a positive impact this year. Monitoring of the attendance of specific groups is now more focused and data is being shared effectively across the pastoral team. There is a large team of staff who, alongside external agencies, work well together to support pupils with low attendance. New roles have been created for Attendance and Engagement Officers and their work with families is starting to have an impact on whole-school attendance. Strategies to overcome barriers to attendance around issues such as the large numbers of vulnerable pupils who transfer into the school during the year and the school's context are beginning to have an effect. Despite these developments, the strategic leadership and co-ordination of the work in this area lacks clarity. Overall attendance has improved this year, but attendance remains too low and persistent absence is too high, which is a cause for concern.

There is a wide range of pupil voice groups such as the School Council and Eco Council, where members talk enthusiastically about their various roles. The School Council members articulate the impact of their work well. For example, they have influence decisions around aspects such as year groups having earlier starts to lunch and purchasing equipment with rewards points. The School Council and year councils identify priorities and evaluate their impact on school life. The school website is used well to share information about the work of pupil voice groups.

Spotlight 2: Careers and the world of work provision

Careers provision is strong, with valuable opportunities to gain experiences of the world of work. The school works productively with the careers service and pupils are positive about the support and advice they receive. There are worthwhile opportunities for pupils to meet and work with mentors from higher education as well as a wide variety of organisations outside school. There are strong links with local universities and colleges, and the school holds a helpful careers market and provides mock interviews. There is an effective work experience programme for Year 10 and pupils value this opportunity. The junior apprentice programmes and careers fayre provide valuable careers support and guidance for vulnerable pupils.

There is a clear vision for ALN provision across the school, supported by effective processes and strong leadership. Staff within the ALN team understand their roles well and there are clear line management structures. The ALN team have made sound progress towards meeting the requirements of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (Wales 2018). Valuable individual development plans (IDPs) and one-page profiles are in place and these are regularly reviewed. Pupils and parents are fully involved in their development. The ALN team have a secure understanding of pupils' learning needs and successfully co-ordinate a wide range of interventions. Robust processes are in place for these interventions, with clear entry and access criteria. This ensures that the ALN team has a good understanding of the progress of ALN pupils. Effective enhanced transition arrangements are in place from Year 5 and cluster clinics have been established in community venues to develop positive relationships with families before the transition process. The ALN team consistently evaluates its work through several beneficial quality assurance processes. This includes setting relevant performance management targets for all support staff within the ALN team to secure consistency and provide beneficial professional learning opportunities.

Leading and improving

The recently appointed headteacher has a clear strategic vision for the school. Since her appointment she has earned the respect of the school community and has quickly gained a sound understanding of the school's current position and what needs to be improved most urgently. She has high expectations of herself and others and is beginning to influence the strategic direction of the school positively. She is well supported by a dedicated team of senior leaders who, together, embrace the school's vision to inspire pupils to succeed.

Over time, leaders have developed a strong sense of teamwork at the school and prioritise the well-being of staff. Leadership has had a positive impact on staff morale, the provision for the development of pupils' numeracy and reading skills, the culture of safeguarding, transition arrangements and care and support for pupils' well-being. Following the departure of a long standing headteacher, interim leadership arrangements were put in place. These leadership roles and responsibilities created useful opportunities for professional development and supported the school at a time of change. However the current structure includes duplication of roles and does not always allow for clear lines of accountability. As a result, there is a lack of strategic leadership of a few areas of the school's work, such as improving attendance.

Staff at all levels are involved in self-evaluation processes. Senior leaders work alongside middle leaders beneficially to model effective practice and quality assure their work. Leaders make good use of data. This includes effective use of detailed internal and external data to identify specific aspects of provision that need improvement.

Senior and middle leaders' evaluations of learning, teaching and other aspects of the school's provision are generally accurate. Appropriately, they evaluate the quality of provision by its impact on pupils' standards of learning and well-being. There is a broadly suitable link between findings from self-evaluation processes and improvement planning. However, planning for improvement is not always strategic enough. In these cases, leaders do not prioritise well enough the precise areas that need most improvement and therefore they do not identify suitable actions. This limits the effectiveness of improvement planning and, as a result, leadership has not had sufficient impact on some important aspects of the school's work, for example the quality of teaching.

There is a comprehensive programme of professional learning available which is valued by staff. This includes useful whole school sessions as well as opportunities for staff to carry out individual research, attend relevant courses, work collaboratively with cluster primary schools and to share good practice in morning briefings. However, due to the lack of precision in the improvement planning processes, the professional learning programme is not tailored well enough to meet the individual needs of staff, particularly in relation to teaching.

Middle leaders understand their roles well and are enthusiastic about their areas of responsibility. They generally have a suitable understanding of standards and the quality of provision within their areas. The school has useful line-management processes. These include regular calendared meetings and discussions in these meetings focus suitably on pupil progress and aspects of provision. Staff feel well supported by their leaders, who provide appropriate challenge to those that they manage.

Leaders place a suitable emphasis on addressing national priorities. For example, leadership has had a positive impact on the provision to develop pupils' numeracy and reading skills and on the provision to support pupils who have additional learning needs. However, they have not had sufficient impact on improving attendance.

Leaders have introduced a wide range of strategies to alleviate the impact of poverty. These strategies include working closely with families and the community, well-being support provisions, practical support with the cost of school life and numerous interventions to support pupils. The school uses grant funding effectively to support pupils impacted by poverty, which has led to the attendance and outcomes of pupils eligible for free school meals being broadly in line with those of the same group nationally. Leaders evaluate the spending of the pupil development grant well.

Governors are supportive of the school and have a developing understanding of their role as critical friends. They have an appropriate understanding of the school's main strengths and areas for improvement. The school is currently in financial debt. The deficit budget for the current financial year has been licensed by the local authority but, at present the school's strategic financial plan does not demonstrate how the deficit will be eliminated.

Leaders foster positive working relationships with parents from transition onwards. The school keeps parents informed through a variety of methods. There are suitable opportunities for parents to share their views on the work of the school.

Additional information

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

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking

The school is currently in financial debt. The deficit budget for the current financial year has been licensed by the local authority. Leaders and governors spend and evaluate the impact of the Pupil Development Grant appropriately.

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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