

**A report on**

**Ysgol Swn Y Don**

**Penmaenrhos  
Colwyn Bay  
LL29 9LL**

**Date of inspection: February 2026**

**by**

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education**

**and Training in Wales**

## About Ysgol Swn Y Don

|  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| Name of provider   | Ysgol Swn Y Don              |
| Local authority  | Conwy County Borough Council |
| Language of the provider   | English                      |
| School category according to Welsh-medium provision  |                              |
| Type of school   | Primary                      |
| Religious character  |                              |
| Number of pupils on roll   | 110                          |
| Pupils of statutory school age   | 94                           |
| Number in nursery classes  | 6                            |
| 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 Primary is 21.7%) | 65.1%                        |
| Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 9.2%)                | 27.7%                        |
| Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home   | 0.0%                         |
| Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language  | 0.0%                         |
| Lead partner in Initial teacher education  | No                           |
| Date of headteacher appointment  | 01/01/2023                   |

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|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable) | 17/01/2017 |
| Start date of inspection                          | 09/02/2026 |

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](http://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

Leaders and staff create a caring and inclusive ethos where pupils' well-being is at the heart of their work. This helps to ensure a calm environment in which pupils feel safe, respected and valued. Across the school, most pupils are polite and considerate, and many younger pupils show positive attitudes towards learning. However, although leaders promote pupils' well-being successfully, they do not focus sharply enough on securing consistently high standards in teaching and learning.

Pupils in the youngest classes make suitable progress in their communication skills. Staff provide stimulating activities and are strong language role models. As pupils move through the school, they develop their literacy skills appropriately, but opportunities to build these skills progressively are limited. In the older classes, expectations of the quality and quantity of written work are often too low. While many pupils begin to develop suitable Welsh oracy skills, these are not built on well enough over time. In the learning resource base (LRB) classes and across the school, staff provide effective support for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) to manage their emotions and behaviour.

Younger pupils apply their mathematical skills purposefully in practical contexts. Older pupils learn appropriate calculation methods, but their work does not always match their needs closely enough and their skills do not develop progressively. Many pupils use digital devices regularly to access spelling or mathematical programmes, but they do not develop wider digital skills systematically. Overall, the quality of teaching from Year 3 upwards is too variable. Activities do not always build effectively on prior learning and expectations are not consistently high.

Leaders review the school's work suitably, but their evaluations do not focus sharply enough on the quality of teaching, or the progress pupils make. In addition, improvement priorities are often too broad. Overall, school governors provide enthusiastic support but rely heavily on information from leaders.

The school has developed strong links with parents and families. They collaborate well and this is beginning to impact positively on pupil attendance.

## Recommendations

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

- R1 Improve the quality of self-evaluation and improvement activities so that leaders identify and prioritise the areas of the school's work that are in most need of improvement.
- R2 Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and ensure that all staff maintain high expectations of pupils.
- R3 Ensure that pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills develop progressively and systematically over time.

## What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress about 12 months after the publication of this report.

## Main evaluation

Leaders and staff at Ysgol Swyn Y Don have established a strong, inclusive ethos that places pupils' well-being at the centre of their work. This ensures that there is a calm and caring environment where pupils feel safe and valued. Staff model positive and respectful relationships consistently, and clear systems support pupils to manage their behaviour and emotions effectively. Consequently, pupils are generally courteous and supportive of one another, and most younger pupils show positive attitudes to learning. Leaders have prioritised well-being successfully, but they have not focused sharply enough on securing high standards in teaching and learning across the school. Roles and responsibilities are distributed suitably amongst staff and leaders. However, not all staff have a clear understanding of their role in bringing about necessary improvements, particularly in implementing the Curriculum for Wales and improving teaching and learning.

Leaders evaluate the work of the school through a limited range of activities including lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. These evaluations are often overly positive or focus too heavily on compliance rather than on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make. Improvement priorities are broad and do not always identify clearly enough the aspects most in need of improvement.

Leaders have addressed national priorities suitably, such as additional learning need (ALN) reform. However, they have not focused sharply enough on improving teaching and learning, and progress to implement the Curriculum for Wales has been slow. Although staff benefit from an appropriate range of professional learning opportunities, these generally support the school's focus on pupil well-being rather than strengthening teaching. Governors provide committed support but rely heavily on information from leaders and do not gather first-hand evidence about the quality of the school's work. This limits their ability to challenge leaders about school improvement.

When pupils start school, they settle quickly into well-established routines and begin to make suitable progress in their communication skills. Staff in these younger classes are strong language role models and create stimulating environments that promote talk and collaboration. Most pupils begin to develop early reading skills well, and they apply their knowledge effectively when reading simple texts. They develop the physical skills necessary for writing through a range of beneficial activities and begin to write for different purposes.

Overall, teachers do not plan carefully enough for the progressive development of pupils' literacy skills. As pupils move through the school, there are fewer opportunities for them to develop their literacy skills systematically. From Year 3 onwards, many pupils struggle to explain clearly what they are learning or to articulate their thinking with confidence. While

they develop their reading skills appropriately and write for a suitable range of purposes, teachers' expectations of the quality and quantity of written work are generally too low. Pupils' extended writing is limited, and there are weaknesses in spelling, punctuation, grammar and presentation. Although many pupils develop early Welsh oracy skills appropriately, leaders do not ensure that these skills are built on progressively.

Many younger pupils apply their mathematical skills purposefully in practical contexts, such as counting to 20 and exploring the properties of shapes. From Year 3 onwards, teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to build on their mathematical understanding. Pupils develop their knowledge of place value and carry out calculations using the four operations successfully. However, provision in these classes does not ensure that pupils' mathematical skills develop progressively, and teachers do not ensure that activities match pupils' developmental needs well enough.

Across the school, pupils use digital devices regularly to access mathematics and spelling programmes, and older pupils create presentations linked to their topics. However, opportunities to develop digital skills in a structured and progressive way are limited. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral social and cultural understanding and most pupils benefit from learning about the history and culture of Wales.

Teaching is generally effective in the younger classes. Teachers plan engaging learning experiences and make good use of well-equipped outdoor areas to support learning. However, in the older classes, the pace of learning within lessons and over time is often too slow, and teachers' expectations are not consistently high. Teachers provide identical tasks for pupils with differing abilities regularly, and activities do not always build securely on pupils' prior knowledge and skills. This leads to a minority of pupils demonstrating low levels of engagement in their learning. Where teaching is effective, staff revisit previous learning purposefully and use questioning skilfully to check pupils' understanding. Most teachers provide suitable feedback that supports many pupils to improve their work. Most teachers update assessment information regularly and use it appropriately to track progress and provide targeted interventions, particularly for well-being.

Across the school, support staff contribute positively to pupils' well-being and inclusion. In the learning resource base (LRB) classes, staff provide sensitive and timely support for pupils' emotional and behavioural needs and promote independence effectively. Most pupils with ALN make suitable progress from their starting points. Leaders work well with parents, staff and external agencies to coordinate appropriate support for pupils with ALN. However, across mainstream classes, staff often over-scaffold pupils' work. This reduces opportunities for pupils to think independently, solve problems or develop resilience.

The school provides worthwhile opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills. Groups such as the Criw Cymraeg, school council and Eco committee contribute meaningfully to school life and influence aspects of provision, such as the newly established outdoor areas.

The school has strong relationships with parents and families. These links are strengthened through the work of the family liaison officer, who facilitates learning activities that enable parents to work alongside their children. Weekly coffee afternoons helps parents to build strong relationships with the school and provides opportunities for them to access further support when needed. Leaders work closely with families to improve pupils' attendance and have introduced robust systems to monitor it. Overall pupil attendance is beginning to improve.

### **Additional information**

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

The school's arrangements for site management do not give any cause for concern.

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/carer 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/carers 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, to listen to them read 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 classes, 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 ([www.estyn.gov.wales](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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