



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

A report on

Ysgol y Ddraig

**Ham Lane East
Llantwit Major
CF61 1TQ**

Date of inspection: May 2022

by

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

About Ysgol y Ddraig

Name of provider	Ysgol Y Ddraig
Local authority	The Vale of Glamorgan
Language of the provider	English Medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	327
Pupils of statutory school age	294
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	33
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 21.3%)</i>	18%
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 20.6%)</i>	12.7%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	.
Start date of inspection	16/05/2022
Additional information	

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

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- (a) The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

The interim executive headteacher and head of school lead a fully committed staff who care for and support all pupils to achieve their best. They have collaborated thoughtfully and successfully with the whole school community to develop the current school's vision for the curriculum, teaching and learning. They provide clear strategic direction for the development of the school, assess the quality of provision and plan and deliver improvements well. Staff roles and responsibilities are clear and leaders model professional values and behaviours effectively. There is a strong sense of teamwork and shared commitment to ensuring that all pupils matter.

Most pupils enjoy being at Ysgol Y Ddraig Primary and develop positive attitudes to learning. Pupils feel safe, well cared for and trust that adults will always support them through challenging times. As they journey through the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, develop a broad range of key learning skills, such as resilience and being able to evaluate their own work. This enables them to make good progress as confident young citizens by the time they leave the school. Overall, pupils are proud to belong to the school and many play an important role, alongside school leaders in deciding school policy and influencing change.

School leaders ensure there is an ongoing focus on improving teaching to improve learning across the school. Teachers collaborate well to plan and provide purposeful lessons. A broad range of relevant, real-life experiences entice pupils to engage positively with learning. Overall pupils enjoy their lessons, however, there are times when a few older pupils find it difficult to concentrate and focus on their learning. The school works closely with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils and has prepared staff well to enable them to tailor provision to individual needs. There is a positive relationship with parents and carers who have appreciated the support offered by the school for well-being and the good communication and access to blended learning during the pandemic.

Recommendations

- R1 Improve opportunities for pupils from Year 4 to Year 6 to use the numeracy skills in their work across the curriculum
- R2 Improve pupils' Welsh language skills
- R3 Improve the behaviour and attitudes to learning of a few older pupils

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning

Most pupils start school with an appropriate range of communication and social skills. As they move through the school, most flourish, make good progress and acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding to move forward successfully from their starting points. Pupils with additional learning needs thrive and make strong progress overall. The very effective provision and teaching for pupils who have additional learning needs ensures they thrive and make strong progress overall.

From a young age pupils develop their language and literacy skills successfully, with many older pupils achieving particularly well by the time that they leave the school. The youngest learners talk excitedly about their learning as they play in an inviting and engaging environment. For example, they talk at length and with extensive detail about their topic on saving bees, showing a high level of understanding of how they can help them to survive. Many older pupils enjoy joining in with discussions and speak sensibly and articulately about current affairs such as the war in Ukraine.

Pupils' reading skills are developing appropriately across the school. Most younger pupils enjoy looking at books independently and are beginning to talk about the pictures with some detail. They follow simple instructions well, such as how to make bark soup in the outdoor mud kitchen. As they move through the school, pupils decode simple texts using their knowledge of letters and sounds effectively. They read with appropriate fluency recognising simple punctuation, such as full stops and speech marks. Most older pupils enjoy reading and read with expression and fluency, they make good use of punctuation cues and read texts at an appropriate level for sustained periods of time. Many are beginning to develop higher order skills, such as inference to predict what will happen next.

Most pupils make good progress with their writing skills. The youngest pupils have an effective range of opportunities through their play, to develop their mark making skills across the areas of provision. Younger pupils form many letters appropriately and use these in their growing attempts at writing. They write suitably for different purposes, such as writing a list for their friends to choose their favourite activity. Most older pupils write with enthusiasm. They edit and redraft their work to improve their writing and write with a clear understanding of its purpose, for instance to create letters, play scripts and poems. Many organise their writing into logical sequences and use subject-specific vocabulary independently, such as when writing a news report. Most adapt their writing style for different purposes well, such as when using a sociable style in a letter to a friend and a more formal style for writing a factual account.

Nearly all younger pupils understand and respond appropriately to teachers' simple instructions in Welsh. A few are beginning to use simple vocabulary such as saying thank you when receiving their fruit at snack time. As they progress through the school, they develop these skills further with nearly all pupils able to ask basic questions with a few older pupils beginning to extend these simple sentences using connectives. A few children use their reading strategies successfully to support their Welsh reading. Many older pupils write ask and answer questions in Welsh with

accuracy and use new vocabulary when writing about 'Yr Ysgol'. However, overall pupils' Welsh language skills are underdeveloped.

Most pupils across the school make suitable progress with their mathematical and numeracy skills. The youngest pupils use mathematical language effectively within their play, a good example of this is when they paint in the style of the artist Jackson Pollock and describe how far the paint has splattered and begin to count the marks they have made. Many pupils use their numeracy skills appropriately in practical situations, for example, Year 2 pupils measure items in the class to the nearest centimetres and weigh fruit in grams and kilograms. They use simple data handling skills, such as collecting information in tally charts when finding out classmates' favourite cereals. Most older pupils have a sound understanding of a suitable range of mathematical concepts. They have a good understanding of fractions of number and can convert fractions to decimals. They can find percentages of amounts, including money. Most can calculate area and perimeter of compound shapes using formula. However, pupils do not apply their numeracy skills in their work across the curriculum often enough.

Many younger pupils use tablet devices confidently to take and use photographs. They use simple word-processing packages, send simple emails, and access a range of educational games successfully. They use QR codes effectively during independent activities to inform them of their tasks. Many older pupils' digital skills are developing well, for example they make interesting presentations, successfully importing pictures and music. They use spreadsheets to compare the cost of meal using provisions from a range of supermarkets and effectively use programming skills to control Lego robots they have made.

Across the school, most pupils take pride in their creative work, and their efforts are attractively displayed throughout the school giving them a sense of achievement and ambition. For example, younger pupils create works of art influenced by famous artists such as Piet Mondrian and Picasso. Older pupils create charcoal drawings of landscapes and stained-glass windows created from a range of different natural materials.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils display high levels of respect for each other and for the school. They feel safe and well-cared for. Pupils trust staff and know who to approach if they have any concerns or worries. Most pupils know how to keep safe including when online. Overall, most pupils behave well during playtimes, lunchtime and when moving around the school. However, a few older pupils lack concentration during lessons and this sometimes has an adverse effect on their progress and on the learning of others.

Most pupils speak confidently about the range of outdoor activities available to develop their physical skills and their emotional well-being. For example, pupils really enjoy forest school sessions and activities with former armed forces personnel that encourage pupils to exercise, work in teams and solve problems. Most pupils know how to make healthy choices related to their diet and physical activity. For example, most pupils have a sound knowledge of what makes a healthy snack and thoroughly enjoy a range of playtime activities such as table tennis, football and frisbee.

Pupil groups such as the school senedd and eco warriors are enthusiastic and take full advantage of opportunities to influence policy and school life for the benefit of the school community. For example, the senedd have successfully bid for a 'big bocs bwyd' to be installed in the school grounds. This community project will provide food, secondhand uniform and a book swap area for the school and local community.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and show resilience when facing challenges. The school actively promotes these key learning skills and attitudes in thoughtful displays which feature these 'can do' principles. For example, the tree of thinking encourages younger pupils to keep trying and never give up. Pupils have a comprehensive understanding of how to improve their work and have regular opportunities to redraft and improve written work and digital studies. Pupils particularly enjoy enrichment sessions where they can be more independent and lead their own learning such as planning to develop raised beds to grow vegetables for the community. During this type of activity nearly all pupils display good attitudes to their learning.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

Leaders have engaged well with the whole school community to create a distinct and clear vision for the implementation of the curriculum for Wales. This work began before the pandemic and as a result places the school in a positive position going forward. The school's ten key principles in practice, created by all staff, match the ethos of the new curriculum well and successfully outlines their approach to planning. As a result, teachers and support staff have a secure understanding of the process and theory of curriculum design. Using this knowledge, teachers plan a range of authentic engaging learning experiences across the school. The 'ACE' curriculum, (Achieve, Challenge, Enjoy) meets the needs and interests of its pupils and provides staff with a clear focus to aim for when planning lessons and activities.

Staff collaborate in teams effectively to plan learning experiences. This ensures consistency in the school's learning offer, for example across mixed aged classes. The youngest pupils benefit from an engaging and inviting provision with easily accessible resources both indoors and outside that promote their creativity, exploration and independent skills well. For example, pupils enjoy working in the 'messy' area and role playing in a replicated camp site. Older pupils engage in stimulating and thought-provoking opportunities to discuss what impact racial and sexual discrimination has played in the context of their community, Wales and beyond.

Through their topic work, teachers make good use of the opportunity to teach pupils about healthy lifestyle choices. For example, they use outside providers to deliver cooking skills to help pupils make a healthy meal and investigate the sugar content found in fizzy drinks. Staff provide regular forest school sessions and draw upon the expertise of former military staff to take fitness sessions as part of the well-being curriculum. Overall, staff use the outdoor environment well to deliver valuable

learning experiences. Teachers plan a wide range of opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and digital skills. For example, younger pupils use tablets and QR codes well, and Year 6 pupils confidently produce interesting presentations, databases and spreadsheets. However, there are limited opportunities for older pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum.

All staff work together successfully to build positive working relationships with pupils. Most create welcoming, purposeful, and supportive learning environments. They often involve pupils in this process. For example, pupils in the nursery, eagerly choose to engage in a wide range of well thought out experiences that they have influenced, such as role play in the farm shop and florist. This contributes to a calm working environment where pupils feel listened to and have confidence that they can ask questions if they need help with their learning. Overall, staff manage pupils' behaviour appropriately and many pupils are engaged and remain on task during lessons.

Across the school most lessons move at a steady pace. Teachers use questioning well to move pupils' learning on and support understanding, according to the needs of pupils. Teachers deploy support staff thoughtfully to assist the development of pupils' skills and well-being. Staff are sensitive to pupils' needs, allowing them to explore and make mistakes before stepping in to offer support. Overall, many pupils engage well during lessons. They are keen and enjoy their learning.

Across the school there are effective approaches to providing feedback to pupils. In the youngest classes, teachers monitor pupils' learning effectively and provide helpful verbal feedback to improve their work and extend learning. Older pupils, from Year 3 to Year 6 have useful opportunities to make suggestions on how to improve their own work and support their peers before receiving feedback from their teachers. Most pupils are suitably challenged in their work. For example, younger pupils are beginning to develop the ability to select tasks appropriate to their level of ability and the next steps of their learning. Older pupils choose the level of challenge they undertake and are encouraged to attempt the next level if they complete their tasks well.

The school makes good use of assessment procedures to track pupil progress in learning as they journey through the school. There are regular pupil progress meetings that include leaders, class teachers and the additional needs co-ordinator in reviewing the progress and well-being of individual pupils. They consider whether provision needs to be adapted to support further progress and improvement.

Care, support and guidance

The level of care, support and guidance provided for pupils and their families is highly effective. The school maintains a continual focus on inclusion and improving all aspects of pupils' welfare. There are effective processes to monitor pupils' attendance and to addresses any persistent absenteeism. Across the school there is a commitment to supporting and keeping all pupils safe and the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Provision for additional learning needs is very effective across the school. There is a clear and well thought out plan for a smooth transition to the new arrangements to support pupils with additional learning needs. A culture of inclusion is clearly evident and this is a strength of the school. Regular and well-planned pupil progress meetings between teachers, learners and the additional learning needs co-ordinator ensure that the needs of pupils are clearly identified, supported and monitored successfully.

Staff are well trained to identify and support pupils with their emotional well-being and consistently provide pupils with the support they need. Learning support staff know and understand the needs of pupils' they support very well. They work skilfully with pupils, communicating clearly with them and helping them to take part in their learning and improve their well-being. Good examples of this are the school's use of 'safe spaces' outside classrooms and a dedicated well-being room where support work takes place to support a very few pupils to enable them to regulate their emotions and re-engage them in their learning.

There are many opportunities for pupils to become active, informed citizens and influence decisions that bring about improvement to school life. A very good example of this is leaders agreeing to allow the pupils to grow vegetables in the school grounds with the intention of selling the produce to parents to support healthy eating. This idea stemmed from Year 5 pupils discussing the current cost of living crisis and finding, through their learning, that a healthy meal can be more expensive than an unhealthy meal.

The school curriculum provides rich opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of equality and diversity. For instance, pupils in Year 6 engaged in a role play exercise where created the conditions of being a deaf, blind and wheelchair bound person, to try to understand some of the challenges that others face in life. The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to strengthen their spiritual, moral and social development through a strong partnership with two local churches. Members of the clergy regularly lead acts of collective worship by attending school or through video recordings, enabling pupils to reflect on important moral issues and values.

Normally, the school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities to pupils that help them to broaden their horizons and develop existing and new interests. However, due to the impact of the pandemic, a smaller number of clubs is currently offered to pupils, including netball, craft and multi-skills. Through a successful grant application, the school has led and hosted holiday enrichment programmes for its pupils and pupils from other local schools. This involves family engagement activities, outdoor learning and team building challenges that support pupils to develop as healthy, confident individuals in a safe environment.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors provide a clear strategic direction. They have collaborated thoughtfully with the whole school community to develop a vision based on developing pupils' achievement and well-being through high quality teaching and learning experiences. The school has an effective staffing structure with clearly defined roles that reflect the current needs of the school. The headteacher

distributes leadership well and the alignment of staff in teams leads to a positive culture of teamwork and to effective sharing of good practice. Many staff take a lead role in addressing priorities outlined in the school development plan and all members of staff contribute effectively to developing the school as a learning organisation.

Overall, leaders have an accurate picture of how well the school is performing. Regular, informative meetings and informal briefings keep all staff up to date with activities across the school. Self-evaluation actions are purposefully planned across the academic year and allied to school priorities, these provide leaders with an honest and largely accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders use first-hand evidence well to inform ways forward, for instance from pupil, staff and parent questionnaires. All staff are involved in self-evaluation. For example, they listen to pupils' views on how teachers can create better opportunities for them to reflect upon their own learning and have a better understanding of what they do well and of how they can improve.

Leaders place a high priority on professional learning. This has a positive influence on the school's work, for example by broadening the school's leadership capacity. Leaders promote a successful professional learning culture amongst staff by supporting and challenging them to undertake research into aspects of their areas of responsibility. This work has been beneficial. For example, it led to a bespoke, whole school well-being strategy and tailored approaches for pupils with specific learning needs. These opportunities enable staff to contribute fully to the life and work of the school and to flourish professionally. Staff at the school benefit from a well-developed performance management process, which they engage with positively.

The school addresses national priorities well, including additional learning needs reform and recovery following the pandemic. Considerable progress in curriculum design has enabled the school to make good progress in its development of the new curriculum for Wales. All staff understand the process and as a result staff plan many authentic learning experiences for all pupils. Leaders provide a range of measures to address the impact of poverty and track the progress of learners well. For example, staff implement actions for the most vulnerable groups such as specific well-being support for pupils whose parents have a military background. The development of pupils' literacy skills is given a high priority and most pupils have developed effective digital skills. However, the school's work to improve the quality of pupils' Welsh language skills is less well developed.

The school is developing effective relations with parents and thinking carefully about how to adapt its provision to ensure better engagement, for example by asking and responding to parents' views about the best ways to share information with them. In addition, as part of developing a new relationships policy, a focus group of parents, governors and staff reviewed the school's approach to behaviour management. School Staff are confident in sharing their practice within the school and across the local cluster of schools. The school collaborates successfully with a number of partners, for example, with local primary schools and within their cluster to develop a shared approach to teaching aspects of the Curriculum for Wales. Of particular note is the school's ongoing work as a lead school for initial teacher education and as a local authority advisory school for non maintained settings.

The school's governing body bring a wide range of relevant skills and expertise to their roles. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and are aware of current standards of performance. They hold the school to account, challenge performance and provide support when required. For example, following the pandemic, governors decided to allocate additional funding to the teaching budget to support improvement to pupils' skills. They ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders monitor the school's finances diligently and are supported valuably by the school administration staff and governors. They ensure that any additional funding is used for its intended purpose. The pupil deprivation grant is used efficiently to support provision for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable to underachievement. Additional funds support provision for a range of additional strategies including, beneficial pastoral care to support pupils' emotional well-being and attitudes to learning.

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

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (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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