



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

A report on

Ysgol Gwynedd

Prince of Wales Avenue

Flint

Flintshire

Flint

Flintshire

CH6 5DL

Date of inspection: January 2023

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About Ysgol Gwynedd

Name of provider	Ysgol Gwynedd
Local authority	Flintshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	534
Pupils of statutory school age	415
Number in nursery classes	54
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 23.0%)	35.0%
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 16.1%)	23.9%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.0%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	9.9%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2021
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	23/01/2023

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.

Overview

Ysgol Gwynedd is a school that is characterised by its exceptionally inclusive, supportive and nurturing environment. The school knows and serves its community very well, for example by engaging highly effectively with families through a range of enriching activities that develop the ability of adults to support their children with their learning and well-being. This contributes effectively towards the ethos of care and support.

Most pupils are happy at the school and make a significant contribution to its engaging atmosphere. Pupils are proud of their school and value the opportunities that they are given to contribute to the school's development over time. For example, the digital leaders, 'Well-being Warriors' and 'Corridor Carers' take on their leadership roles with commitment and enthusiasm. The behaviour of most pupils is exemplary. They interact with their peers and adults with admirable respect and courtesy.

Most pupils make good progress in the development of their literacy skills during their time at school from low initial starting points. They apply their skills purposefully across a good range of contexts. A particular strength of the school is the way it gives prominence to developing the Welsh language. Leaders support staff effectively to develop professionally and improve their Welsh language skills. This, together with the strong Welsh ethos, supports pupils to make good progress in Welsh during their time at the school. Most pupils make good progress in the development of their digital and mathematical skills.

Staff have strong working relationships with pupils based on mutual respect, trust and pride in their school. On the whole, teachers provide appropriate support for pupils. However, in a few lessons, the pace of teaching and learning is too slow and there is a tendency to over-direct learning, which limits the development of pupils' independent learning skills. Teachers do not always have high enough expectations in terms of what pupils are able to achieve and, as a result, the tasks are not always challenging enough for a few pupils.

Leaders have a shared understanding of the school's purpose and all staff are highly motivated and committed to realising the school's vision. They have high expectations for pupils, especially in relation to their well-being. School leaders promote a culture of support, trust and care that creates a positive learning environment for pupils and staff. However, the school's self-evaluation and improvement processes are not focused sharply enough on evaluating the quality of teaching and its impact on pupil progress.

Recommendation

R1 Improve teaching and learning across the school

R2 Sharpen the focus of self-evaluation and improvement processes to focus more specifically on the impact of teaching on learning

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:

- How the school addresses the needs of the school community by engaging families through provision of enriching activities that supports parents to develop their children's learning and well-being
- Cymraeg: Developing a Welsh ethos and culture where the Welsh language can flourish in an English-medium school

for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

The school serves a community where levels of social disadvantage are significantly higher than average. Many pupils start school with communication and social skills that are below the expected level for their age. During their time at school, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those eligible for free school meals, make good progress in many learning areas. However, in general, more able pupils are not challenged enough and, as a result, do not make as much progress as they might.

Most pupils make good progress in the development of their oracy and listening skills as they move through the school. They listen attentively to adults across a wide range of contexts and respond appropriately. For example, nursery pupils listen to the teacher modelling how to construct simple sentences and respond by creating their own sentences orally, based on their favourite superheroes. Year 3 and Year 4 pupils discuss and explain confidently, using suitable language, the steps that Harri the dragon can take to help him to keep healthy.

Nearly all pupils respond very positively to opportunities to learn and speak Welsh. Pupils in Year 1 answer questions relating to Santes Dwynwen adeptly. Older pupils are eager to engage with adults in basic conversation through the medium of Welsh. For example, Year 5 pupils speak confidently in the past tense using good pronunciation and have good recall of a range of vocabulary.

Most pupils make good progress in developing their reading skills during their time at Ysgol Gwynedd. Younger pupils read simple texts confidently from the interactive whiteboard and, as a result, they are able to access the curriculum at the appropriate level. Year 3 pupils discuss their favourite books and authors and give reasons for their choices. They begin to show expression when they read, enjoy reading and appreciate its purpose. Most Year 6 pupils read fluently and decode unfamiliar words effectively. Many use good expression paying close attention to a range of punctuation, such as commas, exclamation marks and italics, and can refer to features such as the glossary and index. In Welsh, pupils do not read as fluently as they do in English. Many pupils read simple Welsh texts accurately but require support to acquire the meaning of what they read.

Most pupils make good progress in English writing skills during their time at the school and apply their skills purposefully across a range of genres and areas of the curriculum. For example, Year 1 pupils enjoy writing simple sentences containing a verb, subject and object. Year 3 pupils design a poster advertising a chocolate bar using a range of persuasive writing techniques. Year 5 pupils plan a formal letter to express their opinion on the closure of a holiday camp using a range of effects such as rhetorical questions and emotive language.

Most pupils develop their digital skills well throughout their time at school. For example, nursery pupils confidently use an app to consolidate their counting in mathematics and Year 6 pupils produce a multimedia presentation to explain the

rules of Australian football to other learners. Older pupils explain maturely and confidently the importance of not over-relying on technology.

Most pupils across the school make steady progress in the development of their mathematical skills. Pupils in reception estimate and count accurately up to 20. Year 4 pupils use the outdoor area well to calculate perimeter. Year 6 pupils read and write numbers beyond one million, and confidently add mixed numbers and fractions. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum and within authentic contexts. As a result, many pupils do not make enough progress in developing this aspect.

Most pupils show positive attitudes to being physically active. They enjoy participating in physical education sessions and listen well to instructions. They show respect for each other and for the rules of the particular activity. Older pupils can catch and pass a rugby ball when given the opportunity, although they are not always physically active enough during these sessions. Many of the older pupils use the school's running area and outdoor gym regularly at breaktimes to improve their fitness.

Most learners make good progress in developing their creative skills. For example, reception pupils mix powder paints, ice and glitter deftly to make potions to give their superheroes special powers. Older pupils develop useful creative skills as they design a piece of 'Aboriginal' art. They display a sound knowledge of its stylistic features using typical colours and patterns to emulate original samples.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils demonstrate high levels of well-being across the school. They are proud of their school and feel safe and secure within its caring environment. They show a great deal of respect for each other, their school and their community. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Most pupils are confident that adults will listen to their concerns and deal with any problems that may arise. Most pupils show a caring attitude towards others.

Most pupils enjoy school and come to school happily, settling quickly into their classes in the morning. They are welcoming and keen to share and discuss their school and work. They are confident when talking about their learning. The majority of pupils find their lessons interesting. For example, Year 4 pupils discuss their mathematics work on measuring eagerly.

The behaviour of most pupils is very good in class, at breaktimes and whilst entering and leaving the hall for collective worship. They have a positive attitude towards their work and follow instructions appropriately. Most pupils listen respectfully to their peers and appreciate that others have a right to different opinions and ideas.

Most pupils are confident learners and show resilience when trying new tasks. For example, in the nursery class, pupils play a number game on the tablet and persevere until they achieve the correct answer. Most pupils engage well with tasks when the activities are stimulating, lively and challenging. However, a very few pupils become distracted when learning is not challenging enough, and the pace of lessons is too slow.

Pupils are beginning to influence what they learn. For example, they highlight things they would like to find out more about in their topic work and tasks that they would like to complete. However, pupils only rarely make improvements to their work as a result of teachers' written feedback.

Groups such as the 'Well-being Warriors' ensure that pupils of all ages understand that being happy and healthy is a priority. For example, they promote the well-being of other pupils successfully by monitoring other pupils' enjoyment and participation during playtime activities.

Nearly all pupils, including those from vulnerable groups, take on a wide range of roles and responsibilities around the school. For example, they contribute to the work of the School Council, Eco Committee and Digital Ambassadors. The work of the pupil voice groups across the school has a positive impact. For instance, the Criw Cymraeg promotes Welsh Language and culture successfully.

The importance of healthy eating and drinking and making good lifestyle choices is understood by most pupils. They participate enthusiastically in physical education lessons and attend a good range of after-school clubs, including football, netball, sewing and the craft and well-being club.

Nearly all pupils are developing a good understanding of the value of diversity and equality in society. They understand their rights and they are aware of what they should do if they feel they are not being treated fairly.

The entrepreneurial skills of many pupils develop well. They work well, for example in the Entrepreneur Club, to develop business plans, organise successful events such as 'doughnut day' and selling potted plants to parents. They develop a suitable understanding of how to market their events and how to generate a profit.

At the present time, pupils' attendance is lower than it was before the pandemic and the attendance rates for pupils eligible for free school meals is notably lower than those of other pupils.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school has worked effectively with governors, parents and pupils to develop its vision for the school's curriculum, 'Cwricwlwm Y Castell'. Staff have made appropriate progress in introducing the Curriculum for Wales. This ensures that pupils, including those with ALN, receive a suitable range of learning experiences and develop their skills appropriately across a broad range of contexts. Staff provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to influence what they learn, and pupils contribute appropriately to the development of the curriculum. As a result, most pupils are engaged in their learning activities. However, staff do not take full advantage of opportunities to draw on the school's local context. Overall, the school's teaching and learning experiences support pupils' progress appropriately as they move through the school.

Provision to develop pupils' literacy skills is generally effective. Teachers provide good opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills across the school. They listen carefully to the contributions of others and make suggestions of their own using

appropriate vocabulary and tone. Staff work hard to develop and embed a Welsh ethos and culture. Teachers encourage pupils to communicate through the medium of Welsh, for example through using the phrase of the week. As a result, pupils take pride in being able to communicate in Welsh and engage with adults confidently within their range of vocabulary.

Staff promote reading positively and encourage pupils to regard reading as an activity to be enjoyed. For example, pupils in nursery are given opportunities to develop their early reading skills by participating in engaging activities on the whiteboard using the context of superheroes. Staff use books effectively to introduce and sustain interesting topic work and, as a result, pupils value the ability to read well and its importance as a life skill.

Teachers provide regular, suitable opportunities for pupils to develop and use their writing skills. They ensure that pupils understand the features of different types of texts and how to write for a variety of audiences and purposes. Teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills across the curriculum and, as a result, most pupils make good progress in developing their writing over time. Teachers provide regular written feedback on pupils' work. However, this feedback is generally congratulatory in nature or focused on basic grammatical mistakes rather than task-specific criteria. Consequently, pupils are unaware as to what they have done well in their written work and what they could do to improve their work. Where feedback does refer more appropriately to what aspects of the work that pupils could improve, opportunities for pupils to respond to this feedback and make improvements to the work are limited.

On the whole, provision for developing pupils' mathematical skills is effective. For example, teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils in reception to construct number sentences using mini superheroes and pupils in Year 4 have purposeful opportunities to use the outdoor areas to calculate perimeter. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum and within authentic contexts.

Provision to develop pupils' digital skills is effective and, as a result, pupils apply their skills confidently and proficiently across a good range of contexts. This is a strength of the school. For example, Year 2 pupils use an appropriate online package to create a bar chart representing items that they have collected following their walk around the school's forest area. Year 6 pupils produce informative posters to share information on topics such as cyberbullying.

Staff across the school are highly committed to developing strong working relationships with pupils. They interact with pupils showing care, humour and kindness and, as a result, almost all pupils are comfortable asking for help or support. Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and this manifests itself in the exemplary behaviour of most pupils in all aspects of school life.

Teachers provide appropriate resources to support pupils. Adults work well to create a colourful, stimulating and inclusive learning environment. Where teaching is most effective, teachers have high expectations of pupils, the pace of lessons is bustling and tasks develop pupils' independent learning skills purposefully. However, in a few sessions where teaching is less effective, pupils' learning is over guided, the tasks

are not challenging enough for pupils and the sessions do not proceed at an appropriate pace. As a result, a few pupils do not make as much progress as they are capable of.

The school invites former pupils to the school to share their experiences as elite sportspeople and pupils value these visits greatly. Consequently, this raises pupils' aspirations and supports them to develop values such as commitment, perseverance and believing in themselves.

Teachers, in general, make good use of the school's extensive outdoor space. They provide younger pupils, for example, with opportunities to be creative and make constructions using bricks, to balance on beams and to learn outdoors in a variety of weather conditions. Older pupils are given opportunities to make good use of the running trail and outdoor gym to improve their fitness. However, in a few outdoor sessions, activities are over-directed and take too long to complete. As a result, a few pupils lose interest and become disengaged.

The quality of reports to parents is consistent across the school. They are generally well-written, comprehensive and purposeful.

Care, support and guidance

Ysgol Gwynedd is a highly caring and supportive learning community. Leaders, teachers and support staff work collaboratively to promote a strong ethos of inclusion and support. There is a considerable focus on promoting respect and good behaviour within a positive and calm learning environment. The school places substantial focus on preventative and proactive work to support pupil well-being. Pupils are supported well to develop secure social and emotional skills. As a result, the conduct of most pupils is exemplary.

The school has developed into a successful community-focused school. Leaders and staff have prioritised the fostering of productive relationships with parents in order to help them support their children in their learning and development. The school provides a wide range of enriching activities for pupils and their families. These include weekly 'Family Fun' craft sessions and sleep support sessions to help parents of pupils who have difficulties with sleep or bedtime routines. The school also facilitates English, numeracy and vocational courses during the school day that help parents acquire valuable skills and move on to further education. The weekly parent cookery session is a notable example of how the school works productively to develop parents' confidence and social skills, in order to support their children's welfare and provide healthy, home cooked meals.

The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCO) and other specialist staff provide purposeful support for pupils who have additional learning needs. The ALNCO has delivered useful training for teachers, in particular around the requirements of the ALNET Wales (2018) Act, so that they understand their responsibilities in planning suitable provision for all pupils. There is effective collaboration with relevant external agencies such as health and children's services, the sensory impairment service and charities to support pupils with specific needs.

Pupils' individual development plans (IDP) are well-written and purposeful, and they comply with statutory requirements. The school offers an extensive range of intervention and support programmes for pupils to enable them to make progress in literacy, numeracy or social and emotional skills. This is a strong feature. Specialist staff keep suitable records of pupil participation and overall progress in these programmes. However, senior leaders do not monitor these sessions regularly enough to evaluate their quality, nor do they evaluate closely enough the overall impact of these initiatives on pupil attainment over time. This means that senior leaders are unable to securely draw accurate conclusions about the suitability of interventions in order to plan for improvement.

The school supports pupils' social, moral, personal and cultural development well. There are considerable opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles and responsibilities, such as 'Corridor Carers' and 'Well-being Warriors'. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is strong through collective worship sessions and well-planned assemblies on relevant themes, such as equality and diversity.

Teachers plan a wide variety of enrichment days and visits from external agencies and charities which help develop pupils' understanding of the world around them and their place in society. These include sessions with youth workers from the Urdd movement, The Deaf Society and local charities. There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to participate in fun charity events such as raising funds for Children in Need. The school organises memorable celebrations to help pupils celebrate British history, such as a party for the Queen's Jubilee. There is a strong focus on promoting pupils' Welsh identity and teaching them about their heritage and culture. The school participates annually in the Urdd Eisteddfod, organises its own annual eisteddfod and celebrates important national days, such as Diwrnod Santes Dwynwen. Recently, pupils made personalised bucket hats to support Wales's participation in the 2022 FIFA World Cup, and in particular to celebrate the contribution of a former pupil to the Welsh team.

There are secure and effective arrangements for safeguarding and child protection. Staff receive regular training and updates, which enables them to understand their roles and responsibilities in protecting children from harm. The school site is safe, secure and well-maintained. The school has recently strengthened its processes to monitor pupil attendance. However, at present, rates of attendance remain lower than those before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leadership and management

School leaders have a shared understanding of the school's purpose and its role in meeting the needs of the pupils and the community it serves, particularly in supporting pupils and families that are vulnerable due to their circumstances. The school's team ethos ensures that there are high levels of commitment to achieving the school's purpose from staff at all levels. Staff respond well to the high expectations leaders have for pupils, especially in relation to well-being and nurture. School leaders' approach to promoting a supportive, collaborative and trusting culture is highly effective in ensuring a positive and caring learning environment for pupils and staff. Leaders establish and maintain a strong culture of safeguarding for pupils.

Arrangements to distribute roles and responsibilities across the school are generally effective. Leaders and staff understand and discharge most aspects of their roles successfully and with enthusiasm. There are valuable opportunities for staff to take on leadership responsibilities and these often lead to positive outcomes for pupils. For example, the leadership of digital learning ensures that pupils have a broad range of experiences and develop a full range of skills to support their learning.

Leaders support school improvement well with professional learning. For example, the school's commitment to supporting staff to develop their personal Welsh language skills and the skills they need to teach Welsh successfully is highly influential. Around a half of the school's large teaching staff have accessed the sabbatical programme. This, along with other valuable professional learning for staff, and the school's embedded Welsh ethos supports pupils to make strong progress in Welsh from their individual starting points.

Leaders seek out and facilitate many useful opportunities for professional learning, including visits to other countries to learn about approaches to teaching and learning. They use this professional learning to enhance the school's provision, for example through the development of forest school sessions. In addition, there are beneficial arrangements for staff to develop additional skills and then train other staff for the benefit of the school community, for instance to provide grief counselling. However, professional learning does not currently focus well enough on improving the quality of teaching.

Staff have regular opportunities to identify potential improvements and implement change. Leaders support this process well. They evaluate, thoughtfully, whether these ideas are likely to be beneficial to pupils' development. This has led to improvements, for example to the outdoor learning environment for younger pupils.

The school has made suitable progress in designing and introducing its interpretation of the new Curriculum for Wales. However, when planning to bring about improvements, leaders are not always clear about what they expect the impact on pupils' progress and outcomes to be. In general, leaders' skills in monitoring the effectiveness of the school's teaching are at an early stage of development. Currently they do not focus well enough on identifying the difference that teaching makes to pupils' progress. This limits leaders' capacity to support and challenge teachers to get better at what they do. The school's culture of trust and mutual respect is admirable but at times systems lack rigour.

The school uses financial resources, including the pupil development grant, well. Leaders use this funding to pay for staff to deliver speech and language support, to enhance nurture provision and targeted work from specialist agencies to support the most vulnerable pupils. The school has used the funding sensibly to build professional capacity by developing staff skills and knowledge that they can use now and in the future.

Leaders place a high priority on developing partnerships with parents and do this very well. The school's strategic family and community engagement work is extensive and often leads to positive outcomes, for example by supporting parents to achieve qualifications, to develop cookery skills and by providing drop-in play

sessions for parents of nursery aged pupils. In combination, this work is highly beneficial to pupils and their families.

Governors have a good understanding of the school's role in serving the local community. They identify accurately that the school's arrangements to care for and nurture pupils are effective. Governors provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge, for example to ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements are robust. They are aware of the school's priorities for improvement and have a suitable understanding of progress towards these overall. However, they are less well informed about the effectiveness of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress. Governors make appropriate arrangements for healthy eating and drinking.

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:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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