



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

A report on

Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen

**Heol yr Ysgol
Tondu
Bridgend
CF32 9EL**

Date of inspection: October 2023

by

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

About Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen

Name of provider	Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	1271
Pupils of statutory school age	1130
Number in sixth form	141
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 20.2%)	27.7%
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 17.8%)	16.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	0.8%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.7%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2018
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	13/10/2015
Start date of inspection	02/10/2023

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

Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen is a caring, inclusive community in which all staff ensure that pupils' well-being and engagement is central to their work. The headteacher provides calm, assured leadership and works tirelessly to raise pupils' aspirations and provide staff with the support they need to help pupils thrive.

Leaders at all levels have a clear understanding of their roles and carry out their duties diligently. They carry out a wide range of activities to evaluate the school's work, although they do not always focus sharply enough on the impact of provision on pupil outcomes.

In many instances, engaging teaching helps pupils to make sound progress in their subject knowledge and understanding. However, teachers do not always plan lessons that consistently challenge and meet the needs of all pupils. Whilst pupils have some useful opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum, this aspect of the school's work is not planned and co-ordinated well enough. In addition, pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise speaking Welsh.

Care, support and guidance is a strength of the school and has a positive impact on, for example, pupils' attendance, including those eligible for free school meals. Effective provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) helps them to make good progress against their individual targets. The Learning Resource Centre (LRC), which caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, is successful in supporting these pupils through Key Stages 3 and 4 and preparing them for life after school.

Leaders have been successful in creating a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. As a result, most pupils feel safe and valued and are proud of their school.

Recommendations

- R1 Streamline self-evaluation and improvement processes and ensure that they focus consistently on the impact of provision on pupil outcomes
- R2 Increase the effectiveness of teaching by ensuring that it provides appropriate challenge for all pupils
- R3 Strengthen provision for the progressive development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and Welsh skills

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will work with the local authority to review the school's progress.

Main evaluation

Learning

In lessons, many pupils, including those with ALN, make sound progress in developing their subject knowledge and understanding. They have a firm grasp of key terminology and recall prior learning successfully, for example the main features of life in the trenches in World War One, the origins of Sikhism, and the basic functions of a spreadsheet. In a few instances, pupils apply their learning to new contexts well, such as when they use their understanding of algebra to solve area and perimeter problems. In a minority of cases, pupils do not make sufficient progress. In a few lessons, this is due to the poor behaviour of a few pupils, which disrupts learning. Frequently, however, it is because the tasks they are set are not suitably challenging.

The majority of pupils make appropriate contributions to class discussion and explain their ideas with suitable clarity, for example when describing the processes of evaporation and condensation in science. These pupils listen carefully to their peers and their teachers. A minority of pupils are reluctant to participate in discussion work, or give only brief and underdeveloped responses. These pupils' limited vocabulary often prevents them from articulating their ideas clearly.

Many pupils are able to locate and select relevant information from a range of sources. The majority highlight and annotate key words and phrases appropriately and can make basic inferences from texts. A few have suitably developed advanced reading skills. They analyse authors' style and intent and can compare and contrast texts, for example when considering the differences between the role of women in the two world wars.

In the majority of cases, pupils write with appropriate accuracy and clarity. They understand how to write for different purposes and audiences and plan and organise their writing accordingly. In religious education, for example, they combine explanations of key terms with a wide range of adjectives to produce engaging diary entries about the festival of Vaisakhi. A minority of pupils do not proof-read their work carefully enough, and make frequent, basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. In a few cases, poor presentation and handwriting have a notably negative impact on the quality of pupils' written work.

In mathematics lessons, many pupils demonstrate sound basic number skills. They perform mental arithmetic with suitable confidence and accuracy and have an appropriate grasp of percentages and negative numbers. When given meaningful opportunities to do so, they use their numeracy skills appropriately across the

curriculum, such as when carrying out calculations in science or working with measurements in design technology. However, overall, pupils do not develop their numeracy skills outside mathematics consistently well enough due to shortcomings in the tasks they are set. The majority of pupils construct graphs appropriately, but in a minority of cases their graphs are drawn without enough attention to accuracy or correct scales and labels. In general, pupils do not analyse or interpret graphs often or well enough.

Most pupils can, with support, write simple sentences in Welsh. A minority of older pupils produce longer pieces of writing independently. In general, pupils lack the skills or confidence in speaking Welsh.

Pupils develop their digital skills suitably across the curriculum, such as when they use video editing software to produce presentations, or create podcasts to discuss literary texts. In general, pupils develop their creative and physical skills appropriately. For example, they demonstrate creativity in physical education when designing fast and slow movements within the balance and travel sections of their gymnastic sequences. In design technology, they use their thinking skills well to consider how their ideas can be made into practical products that serve a purpose in everyday life.

In the sixth form, many pupils demonstrate well-developed verbal skills, for example when discussing moral ambiguity in 'Doctor Faustus'. They listen carefully to their peers and teachers and make thoughtful contributions to discussion work such as when they analyse changes in the design of household technology over time.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils feel safe and are proud of their school. They are positive about the supportive and caring environment and feel they can approach any member of staff with concerns. They show respect towards each other and treat visitors politely and with courtesy.

In lessons, nearly all pupils enter the classroom calmly and settle quickly. Many engage positively with their learning and sustain their concentration successfully. These pupils take pride in their work and, when encouraged to do so, work well independently. The majority listen to their teachers and their peers carefully and participate willingly in discussion work as well as pair and group tasks. A minority of pupils are reluctant to participate in discussion activities and lack confidence in sharing their ideas. A few lack resilience and independence in their learning and are over-reliant on their teachers. In a few lessons, the poor behaviour of a few pupils disrupts their own learning and that of others.

In general, pupils understand the importance of healthy lifestyle choices and make good use of facilities such as the outdoor gym equipment. They have a developing understanding of the concepts of diversity and equality and the importance of tackling discriminatory behaviour.

Pupils participate enthusiastically in a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities. Groups such as Criw Cymraeg and Young Carers as well as extra-curricular activities such as dance club and sporting teams help develop pupils as

ethically informed citizens. Pupil leadership groups contribute well to decision-making, for example by influencing Key Stage 4 option choices, increasing the number of bins and benches, and designing the proposed summer uniform.

Pupils in the sixth form are mature and independent learners. They contribute meaningfully to school life, for example by supporting younger pupils through their role as mentors and subject, skills or anti-bullying ambassadors. The 'Head Learners' team represent the student body with enthusiasm and confidence. For example, they have independently developed their own improvement plan which focuses on developing further support for younger pupils and new sixth formers, as well as organising and promoting worthwhile whole school events.

Pupil attendance has increased steadily since the COVID-19 pandemic. In the academic year 2022-2023, attendance rates, particularly those of pupils eligible for free school meals, improved well. However, the number of persistent absentees remains too high.

Pupils in the LRC feel safe and happy and included in school life. Most are enthusiastic learners who take pride in their work.

Teaching and learning experiences

In most cases, teachers develop positive relationships with their classes. This helps pupils to enjoy lessons and engage with their learning positively. These teachers have strong subject knowledge and demonstrate enthusiasm for their subject. They understand examination requirements well and communicate this to pupils helpfully when appropriate.

In many instances, teachers engage and interest pupils well through sequences of activities that develop pupils' subject knowledge and understanding appropriately. However, overall, teachers do not consider the prior learning of different pupils consistently well enough. As a result, some pupils are not challenged sufficiently, and others do not receive enough support for their learning. This means that pupils' skills do not always develop as well as they could.

Many teachers question pupils suitably as lessons progress, and this helps to ensure that they remain on task purposefully. However, in the majority of lessons, teachers do not use questioning consistently well enough to probe and develop pupils' understanding of new ideas.

In many cases, teachers have suitably high expectations of pupils' behaviour. However, in a minority of cases, their expectations of pupils' engagement, and the quality of their work, is too low. For example, they too often accept brief and underdeveloped verbal responses to questions or poorly presented and inaccurate written work.

Many teachers give pupils helpful verbal feedback during lessons. They provide pupils with written commentary on their learning when appropriate, and are beginning to allow pupils time to improve their work in response. However, written feedback does not always support pupils to improve their learning or develop their skills well enough. As a result, poor work is often not identified or addressed sufficiently.

The school has appropriate systems to evaluate and monitor the progress of pupils in key stage 4 and the sixth form, and is working thoughtfully to develop suitable processes for younger pupils that meet the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales. They use this information suitably to identify pupils who may need extra support.

The school provides pupils with an appropriate range of general and vocational courses, including public services, hospitality and catering, engineering and sports. Beneficial partnerships with neighbouring schools and the local college extend the curriculum offer well, enabling pupils to study subjects such as further mathematics, music and economics.

In order to develop learning experiences which fit suitably with the ethos of the Curriculum for Wales, the school collaborates with a wide range of stakeholders. Teachers encourage pupils to make meaningful connections between subjects. For example, in the 'Live well for less' project pupils learn about what to eat on a budget and how to manage their mental and physical well-being.

The school offers a variety of worthwhile extracurricular activities which are inclusive and provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to socialise and develop wider skills outside the classroom. This includes the 'Hellfire' role-playing board game club, Duke of Edinburgh Award and a range of sporting clubs. Trips to universities and visits from successful ex-pupils help to raise aspirations.

Across the curriculum, pupils are provided with suitable opportunities to practise their literacy skills. However, the school does not have a sufficiently strategic approach to developing these skills across the curriculum. In a few instances, subjects other than mathematics offer pupils opportunities to practise basic numeracy skills. However, too often numeracy tasks are overly contrived and are not challenging enough to support the development of these skills. The school is beginning to develop meaningful opportunities for pupils to practise their digital skills at an appropriate level across the curriculum, but this work remains at an early stage.

There are some suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about Welsh culture and heritage. For example, pupils celebrate 'Diwrnod Su'mae Shwmae' and in history they study Irish immigration to Wales. Overall, pupils have limited opportunities to practise speaking Welsh outside of Welsh lessons.

The personal and social education (PSE) programme helps pupils to understand the impact of lifestyle choices and behaviours. For example, they learn about keeping safe online, forming healthy relationships and the dangers of substance misuse. The school offers pupils a variety of opportunities to learn about different cultures and celebrate diversity. For example, a few pupils lead assemblies to raise awareness of the experiences of the LGBTQ+ community.

A particular strength of the school is how it prepares pupils to make informed choices about their aspirations and future careers. All pupils have beneficial opportunities to learn about different careers pathways and participate in work experience placements in Year 10 and Year 12.

Pupils in the LRC benefit from a flexible curriculum that is tailored carefully to meet their individual needs. This includes integration into the mainstream curriculum where

appropriate. Older pupils are able to study a range of courses that meet their needs well. Beneficial partnerships with local colleges and specialist provision support these pupils' successful transition into further education, training and employment.

Care, support and guidance

Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen is a caring community where pupil well-being and inclusion is at the heart of every aspect of school life.

Senior leaders ensure that all members of the school community understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe and know how to report any concerns. The safeguarding team provide useful and timely professional learning, which helps staff to recognise potential harms and respond promptly and diligently. The school works effectively with a range of external agencies to respond to any child protection concerns.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development well. Themes and topics in the PSE programme are reviewed regularly to respond to current issues and pupil feedback. For example, the school recently amended the curriculum to include a greater focus on mental health following a pupil survey.

Pupils benefit from a comprehensive programme of extra-curricular opportunities, such as Caffi Siarad, LGBTQ+ club and chess club, as well as many sporting activities. These provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their physical and creative skills. The school works purposefully to reduce the impact of poverty on pupils. For example, the 'Believe in Me' after-school club provides pupils who are eligible for free school meals with mentoring and academic support alongside a hot meal.

Senior leaders work effectively with local primary schools to support pupils, including those with ALN, with their transition to secondary school. A wide range of targeted interventions support vulnerable pupils' emotional well-being appropriately. Staff work with external agencies to provide specialist support to those pupils who need it most. For example, pupils benefit from working with a national charity to improve their resilience and prepare them for adult life.

The school's provision for pupils with ALN is a strength. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCO) works purposefully with an assistant ALNCO and the ALN team to ensure these pupils' needs are met. The pupils benefit from a wide range of strategies to improve their literacy, numeracy and social skills. The team has developed highly beneficial relationships with families, particularly through worthwhile person-centred reviews. Pupils' individual development plans are comprehensive and include purposeful targets, which are monitored closely by the ALN team.

The LRC is a welcoming and supportive environment for pupils with a wide range of additional needs. These pupils access a suitably varied curriculum in the LRC and also access mainstream classes when appropriate. A few, when ready, transfer fully to mainstream provision. Staff encourage LRC pupils to participate in the life of the school, for example by part taking part in the school production or becoming members of the eco committee.

The school has effective arrangements to monitor attendance with a suitable focus on vulnerable pupils. It celebrates good attendance through its reward system and the highly contested form attendance league. It works well to support pupils with low attendance. For example, the Phoenix Centre provides valuable support to pupils with anxiety-based school avoidance, providing a safe space to facilitate their return to school. This has led to improvements in attendance, especially that of pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

There are suitable systems and procedures to support teachers to deal with any disruptive behaviour. In general, the school responds to any allegations of bullying appropriately and uses restorative approaches well to support those pupils involved. The Phoenix Centre provides helpful support for pupils at risk of disengagement from learning.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has established a positive ethos of collaboration, transparency and trust throughout the school. Staff have a shared ambition to raise the aspirations and skills of all pupils to become self-confident, resilient individuals. Leaders value and promote pupil attainment and well-being equally. They have created a strong safeguarding culture in which pupils feel nurtured.

Generally, staff understand and carry out their roles and responsibilities diligently. Leadership is distributed widely across the school which promotes cohesiveness and shared professional values. Senior leaders have introduced clear systems to monitor important aspects of the school's work, which have created a consistency of approach. However, too often these systems are over complicated and do not support the school's priorities well enough. In general, leaders hold staff to account suitably and tackle underperformance appropriately.

Senior and middle leaders work well together. Middle leaders value the support and challenge they receive and many undertake their responsibilities conscientiously. Many are reflective and enthusiastic leaders.

Leaders at all levels undertake extensive self-evaluation activities and collect first-hand evidence. However, when evaluating teaching, leaders do not consider well enough its impact on pupil progress. They have an overly generous view of teaching because the process is too focused on compliance at the expense of quality and effectiveness. As a result, leaders do not always identify precisely enough what needs to improve. In other areas of the school's work, leaders also have a tendency to collect evidence without considering its impact. This results in priorities that are too broad and consequently improvement processes have not had a consistent enough impact on important areas of the school's work, such as the progressive development of pupils' skills across the curriculum.

Leaders provide valuable opportunities for staff to develop and share practice, such as 'Teach Meet Wednesdays'. The broad range of professional learning is aligned appropriately to national and school priorities. There are beneficial opportunities for staff to set the direction for their own professional learning through performance management arrangements, and to support the ambitions of the school through individual action research projects. Many teachers have taken part in joint learning

walks to develop their leadership skills. However, the school's approach to professional learning does not always focus closely enough on specific aspects for improvement.

Governors are enthusiastic and committed supporters of the school. They are well informed about statutory duties such as safeguarding and healthy eating and drinking. However, governors are not always provided with sufficient information to help them set the strategic direction of the school or hold senior leaders to account.

The headteacher, director of finance and personnel monitor the budget carefully to ensure that money is spent on local and national priorities. Leaders prioritise mitigating the effects of poverty on attainment and well-being through effective use of the pupil development grant and sourcing other funding creatively. This has had a positive impact in some important aspects of the school's work such as improving the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals.

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

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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