



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

**A report on**

**Radyr Comprehensive School**

**Heol Isaf  
Radyr  
CF15 8XG**

**Date of inspection: February 2024**

**by**

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

## About Radyr Comprehensive School

Name of provider	Radyr Comprehensive School
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	1409
Pupils of statutory school age	1157
Number in sixth form	249
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Secondary is 21.2%)	14.3%
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 14.8%)	8.7%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	1.3%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	3.5%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2012
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	11/03/2016
Start date of inspection	26/02/2024

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](https://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

Leaders in Radyr Comprehensive School place improving teaching at the centre of all of their work. This, along with the high priority they place on pupils' well-being and developing their sense of belonging, means that most pupils enjoy being at school, engage effectively during lessons and feel safe and valued as part of the school community.

The impact of professional learning on the quality of teaching is a notable strength of the school. Leaders have focused closely on developing teaching as the core element of their approach to implementing Curriculum for Wales. This work has had a positive impact, for example on improving the quality of questioning in lessons.

Staff foster positive relationships with their pupils that help them to feel safe and ready to learn. In many instances, strong teaching helps pupils make good progress in their learning. In a minority of lessons, inspirational teaching supports pupils to make particularly rapid progress.

The school has taken a measured approach to developing the provision for pupils' skills. This has ensured a well-understood whole-school approach where opportunities for pupils to apply their reading, writing and speaking skills are plentiful and their ability to read and understand a broad range of complex texts is a strength. The opportunities for pupils to helpfully apply their numeracy and digital skills are planned carefully.

The headteacher and his senior team have developed a clear vision for the school which is rooted in providing high-quality learning experiences and developing a coherent approach to their Curriculum for Wales. They have secured a generally broad and balanced curriculum, although this narrows in Year 9 when pupils begin their option choices. Leaders carry out an extensive range of evaluation activities and know their school well. However, their evaluation of learning, including the progress that pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make, is not always rigorous enough. This means that improvement planning is sometimes not sufficiently precise.

Leaders have established a positive safeguarding culture where staff understand their roles and most pupils know where to turn to when they require support. Most pupils feel free from bullying and that staff deal with any issues or poor behaviour effectively. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and show respect for staff visitors and their peers. Pupils embrace the extensive range of leadership opportunities and have successfully supported the school to celebrate diversity and create a culture where most pupils feel included as part of the whole school community.

## Recommendations

- R1 Refine self-evaluation activities so that they focus precisely on pupils' learning and skills, including those of pupils with additional learning needs

R2 Ensure that pupils have access to the full range of learning experiences until the end of Year 9

## 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 the impact of professional learning on improving the quality of teaching.

## Main evaluation

### Learning

In lessons, many pupils make strong progress in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. They recall prior learning well and apply this confidently in a range of challenging contexts. In a minority of lessons, pupils make rapid progress, for example when developing their understanding of syntax, verb inversion and clauses in international languages. In a few lessons, shortcomings in teaching mean that pupils do not make as much progress as they could. Overall, pupils with ALN make at least suitable progress.

Most pupils listen respectfully and with attention to their teachers and peers and respond promptly to instructions. They provide clear and well-structured verbal responses and speak confidently using a broad range of vocabulary to communicate their thoughts and opinions. A few are highly articulate and confidently challenge or support different viewpoints. In a few lessons, pupils offer more limited responses and do not engage well enough in classroom discussions.

Most pupils read a range of challenging texts confidently. They are able to extract relevant information and demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of different texts, such as when they create a timeline of events based on the parable of 'The Good Samaritan'. A majority successfully employ a range of advanced reading skills. For example, they synthesise information about the impact of malaria in Malawi in geography and examine Blake's language choices in the poem 'The Tyger'.

Many pupils write effectively for a range of purposes and audiences. They structure their work well, use a wide range of subject specific vocabulary and produce writing that is mostly accurate, clear and engaging. A few pupils make basic errors in their spelling, punctuation and grammar and do not structure their writing well enough.

In mathematics lessons, pupils generally make substantial progress. Most have secure number skills. They have a good grasp of the four rules of number and apply these well, for example when collecting like terms in algebra or when spontaneously simplifying fractions when calculating probabilities. Many pupils work confidently with data and show a good understanding of shape and measure, for example when

finding the area and volume of complex shapes to help them to design their ideal bedroom. In mathematics, most pupils plot and suitably analyse a range of different graphs. However, in other relevant subjects, pupils sometimes make errors in their graphs and do not analyse them sufficiently.

In general, pupils have secure digital skills. Many work competently with a range of software. Many are able to use databases and design games based on pieces of creative writing. Pupils are beginning to apply their digital skills in a range of subjects across the curriculum, for example when creating videos to share Welsh culture and heritage with their peers in a school in Boston, USA. Generally, pupils develop their physical skills well. They use their fine motor skills when chopping and preparing vegetables in food technology and demonstrate strong co-ordination skills when treading water in water polo or when playing basketball.

Many pupils have well-developed thinking skills. They provide clear and well-reasoned arguments and tackle a range of problems creatively and with fluency. A minority of these pupils provide detailed justifications for their reasoning. Overall, pupils develop their creativity well, for example when devising pieces in drama, producing still life drawings or writing descriptively to recreate the feeling of a silent cinema in the 1920s.

In their Welsh lessons, the majority of pupils provide appropriate responses to questions and are able to translate a suitable range of words and phrases. They pronounce short phrases clearly. When using vocabulary provided by their teacher, more able pupils write a series of detailed paragraphs, for example when describing the benefits of being bilingual. A few pupils communicate clearly and confidently in Welsh and show a good understanding of the language.

Overall, pupils in the sixth form make strong progress. Many recall their prior learning effectively, demonstrate a strong knowledge and understanding of the subjects they study and apply their skills well in a range of contexts. For example, they analyse what twin studies have found about the heritable trait that may increase the risk of criminal behaviour in psychology. Pupils in the sixth form talk confidently about their work and demonstrate good understanding of current affairs.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

Most pupils enjoy being at Radyr Comprehensive School and feel safe and valued as part of the school community. As a result of their commitment to the school's core values of 'Respect, Commitment, Success' most pupils behave well, are polite, courteous to staff and visitors.

Most pupils engage readily in learning and show determination to improve, for example in the meaningful way in which they promptly respond to teachers' verbal feedback. They engage positively in class discussions and many work well independently. Pupils' confidence to share ideas orally is a notable strength. Most pupils communicate effectively with their peers and listen to one another carefully. Generally, older pupils have clear and aspirational goals for what they hope to achieve in the future.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities which support their academic, sporting and cultural development. They participate enthusiastically in groups such as the LGBTQ+ Pride Group, Christian and Abrahamic Faith Club, and French Club. They demonstrate a good understanding of promoting equality and diversity.

Many pupils develop well as ethical citizens, supported by their involvement in a range of charity work. They are proud of their work for the charity 'Mind'. Most pupils understand the importance of making healthy choices and benefit from a range of support to help them adopt a healthy lifestyle. They participate enthusiastically in a broad range of extra-curricular activities which help develop their confidence, creativity and physical skills.

Pupils value the wide range of inclusive opportunities they have to take on leadership roles and responsibilities. Through membership of the governing body, sixth form council, school council and sub-committees, they have been actively involved in many aspects of school improvement. For example, the sixth form have led the development of a programme to promote the importance of girls engaging in science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects.

Many pupils feel that the school listens to their views, and that changes are made as a result, for example in the introduction of 'Radyr Reach Out', which offers a secure way to raise concerns. Most pupils are confident about who to turn to when they need support. However, a very few pupils report that they are not fully aware of where to access mental health guidance when required.

Pupils in the sixth form are happy and enjoy school. Most are highly interested and committed to their studies and appreciate the advice and support that helps them to make informed choices about their future. The maturity of sixth form pupils at Radyr Comprehensive School is notable. They take an active role in the life of the school, such as when they act as peer mentors in mathematics to support vulnerable pupils.

Between the academic years 2018-2019 and 2022-2023, the school's rate of attendance fell by a much smaller amount than seen nationally. Last year it was above that of similar schools. The rate of persistent absence is well below the national average. The attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. Since September 2023, rates of attendance have continued to improve. The attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals has increased well when compared to the same time period last year.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

Nearly all teachers foster positive working relationships with their pupils and have well-established classroom routines. These teachers have strong subject knowledge and make effective use of subject specific terminology whilst providing strong language models to their pupils.

Many teachers plan their lessons carefully to build successfully on pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. They prepare a range of worthwhile activities that stimulate pupils' interest. These teachers provide clear instructions, encourage independence, and circulate the classroom purposefully to challenge and support pupils' progress.

They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure that work is well matched to pupils' abilities.

Most teachers frequently use questioning well to check pupils' recall and deepen their understanding. Many adapt their questioning effectively and help pupils to develop their verbal responses. In a minority of lessons, questioning is highly effective in probing pupils' understanding and encouraging them to think more deeply about a range of topics.

In a minority of lessons, teaching is inspirational. In these lessons teachers deliver with verve and infectious enthusiasm. They have particularly high expectations of pupils' participation and progress. These teachers challenge all pupils to be the best they can. They successfully motivate pupils and are confident to take measured risks in their teaching. These teachers seamlessly adapt their lessons according to pupils' learning and have a relentless focus on improving pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.

In a few lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and do not challenge them sufficiently. These teachers do not build on pupils' learning well enough and sometimes over-direct learning or interrupt pupils' learning unnecessarily. A few do not cater for all pupils' needs well enough and do not address off-task behaviour.

Many teachers provide useful and constructive feedback on pupils' work. Their feedback generally helps pupils to understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. In a few instances, feedback is too superficial or not clear enough to benefit pupils' learning.

The school has a clear and well-understood vision for Curriculum for Wales. Leaders have approached their curriculum development with excitement and enthusiasm, placing a strong emphasis on promoting high-quality teaching. Since introducing its curriculum to Years 7 and 8, staff have continued to trial, evaluate and adapt their approaches and make refinements in order to provide the best learning experiences for pupils. This has been supported by working closely with partner primary schools to ensure that the curriculum in Year 7 builds on pupils' learning experiences successfully.

The school's curriculum is suitably broad and balanced and generally caters for individual needs. The school has continued to offer four option choices for Key Stage 4. However, the breadth of the curriculum narrows for pupils in Year 9, which means that they do not have access to the full range of learning experiences across all areas of learning.

Leaders have taken a sensible approach to improving the provision for the progressive development of pupils' skills. As a result, there is a wide range of beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their reading, writing and speaking skills across the curriculum.

Skills co-ordinators collaborate effectively with specific departments. They make effective use of data to target pupils with weaker literacy and numeracy skills and provide a successful programme of interventions, helping many pupils to make good

progress. Within digital technology lessons, there are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their digital skills. Across the curriculum, there is a suitable range of opportunities for pupils to develop these skills.

The school offers a range of academic and vocational courses in both Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Leaders consider pupils' views carefully to ensure that as many pupils as possible study their chosen courses. Staff provide pupils with beneficial and impartial information and guidance to make informed choices at each transition point. This is supported well by a range of additional enrichment opportunities for all pupils. These include the 'careers week' in Year 12 and regular careers advice for pupils from Year 10.

A tailored programme of personal and social education supports the development of pupils' social and emotional skills well across all key stages. This is supported by helpful opportunities during tutorial periods where pupils discuss and reflect on important current issues. There are valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their social and emotional skills and their appreciation of equality and diversity. They gain an understanding of the history and experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, for example by studying the life of Betty Campbell.

The Welsh department and Criw Cymraeg have planned a few opportunities for pupils to develop their appreciation of Welsh heritage and culture. These include whole-school events such as sending messages on Diwrnod Santes Dwynwen. However, the provision for developing pupils' use of the Welsh language outside of the classroom is in the early stages of development.

Staff provide a vibrant programme of creative, sporting and cultural extra-curricular opportunities for pupils during and after school hours. These include well-attended clubs such as rock club and orchestra. In addition, teachers plan a wide variety of educational visits and enrichment activities, which complement the curriculum. These include visits to galleries and museums and performing at a local venue.

### **Care, support and guidance**

Radyr Comprehensive School provides a nurturing environment and promotes its values of 'Respect, Commitment, and Success' effectively. Staff work sensitively and reflectively to help most pupils feel safe and secure. Links with a range of external partners, including the police community officer, are highly successful in supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's provision to support pupils in making healthy lifestyle choices is carefully monitored and adapted to pupils' needs. This includes raising awareness of the dangers of vaping and electric scooters. Form tutors foster strong relationships with pupils, taking an active role in supporting pupils' progress and well-being and encouraging regular attendance.

The school values the voice of pupils and facilitates the development of pupil leadership skills well. Pupil-led groups have successfully influenced aspects of school life, such as changing the structure of the school day and shaping the new behaviour and rewards policy.

There are highly effective arrangements for supporting pupils during the transition from primary to secondary school. To support pupils at other transition points, the school provides individual options and advice meetings for pupils and their parents with senior leaders. In addition, the ALN careers adviser provides valuable support and guidance for targeted pupils.

The ALN team takes a pupil-centred approach to supporting pupils and their families. The school has made suitable progress towards the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act. Pupils' Individual Development Plans (IDPs) identify key information about how staff can best support them.

Recent changes to the ALN team have led to a sensible re-distribution of support which focuses on enhancing pupils' social, emotional and mental well-being. The team are appropriately trained and provide emotional support for pupils via a range of beneficial programmes. The OASIS area, nurture provision, aspire and the newly created revolve programme provide nurturing environments and tailored support to help pupils overcome their barriers to learning and access the curriculum.

The needs of specific groups of learners are monitored and catered for well. For example, a Young Carers group provides sensitive emotional and well-being support. Well-being officers, attached to each year group, provide beneficial mentoring for targeted pupils and are valuable daily point of contact for pupils and parents.

Specific interventions for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are provided via teacher-led interventions. These pupils follow a suitable bespoke learning package according to their needs. The impacts of literacy interventions are suitably tracked and monitored. The pastoral and ALN teams meet frequently to review information collected on pupils, ensuring that individuals receive appropriate support. However, the tracking of ALN learners is limited mainly to academic progress.

Leaders and staff contribute to a strong safeguarding culture where all members of the community are aware of their responsibility to keep pupils safe. The large safeguarding team ensures that any concerns are dealt with swiftly and effectively, making referrals to outside agencies where necessary. Staff are well trained and arrangements to keep pupils safe are clear and robust.

Leaders and staff monitor the attendance and punctuality of individuals and groups closely. The school has introduced a number of suitable strategies to improve pupils' attendance, including daily contact home where attendance causes any concern. The rates of pupils' attendance have improved well over the past two years.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher provides thoughtful, passionate leadership and inspires trust in his staff. He is supported effectively by the senior team. Together, they offer a clear direction and create a culture of high expectations for staff and pupils, which focuses on developing high quality teaching and effective pastoral care. This is captured in the school's motto 'Respect – Commitment – Success, Parch – Ymrwymiad – Llwyddiant'.

Senior leaders' responsibilities are delegated sensibly, defined clearly and staff have a sound understanding of their role in driving improvements. Senior leaders consider the well-being of staff carefully in all decisions. As a result, staff feel that they are appreciated and empowered to carry out their roles.

Line management arrangements are clear and middle leaders benefit from helpful support and challenge on different aspects of their work. Regular meetings that focus closely on the school's strategic priorities help to hold leaders to account for securing improvements in their areas of responsibility. The school has been successful in identifying and improving the practice of staff that are underperforming with coaching support, tailored to individual needs. Performance management is linked closely to school priorities and the development needs of individual staff.

Senior leaders have high expectations for all aspects of the school's work and promote a culture of continuous improvement. There is an extensive programme of activities to evaluate its performance. As well as lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work, it seeks regularly the views of pupils regarding both pastoral issues and their progress in lessons. Leaders review pupil assessment data closely and robustly.

Middle leaders value the support that they receive from the senior team. Overall, they understand the strengths and areas for improvement within their areas of responsibility well. They create well-considered and coherent plans for improvement. This has contributed successfully to improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' well-being. Although self-evaluation activities carried out by leaders inform whole school planning suitably, they do not always identify precisely enough the specific aspects of the school's work that need improvement.

Leaders have taken good account of the findings from their last inspection and responded effectively to a number of national priorities. There is a strong focus on improving attendance and staff have had access to beneficial opportunities to strengthen their teaching approaches in the development of Curriculum for Wales. There is a relentless focus on improving the attainment and well-being of pupils eligible for free school meals or those from low-income households. This includes ensuring high quality teaching and targeting individual pupils with additional support for their learning. For example, pupils eligible for free school meals are supported to develop their numeracy skills through the school's 'passion project' scheme.

Professional learning is a significant strength of the school. Leaders have carefully considered a wide range of research on how to improve teaching. They share findings from this with staff and focus closely on helping them understand how particular strategies could be applied. Staff are given time to pursue their own professional interests through action research and encouraged to collaborate, innovate, and learn from each other. In addition, individual staff have been trained as coaches to work with teachers to improve specific aspects of their practice. The continuous focus on improving teaching within the school is having a notable impact.

The headteacher and other leaders communicate effectively and build productive relationships with parents. The headteacher sends weekly newsletters with updates on guidance and procedures. Although the school communicates regularly, a very few parents are not always aware of how the school supports pupils' mental health and additional needs.

Governors are committed and proud of the school. They undertake their roles enthusiastically and have a good understanding of the school's main strengths and areas for development including the provision for healthy eating and drinking. They are involved appropriately in the life of the school and offer leaders robust challenge that helps guide their decisions.

Leaders manage the school's finances effectively. The headteacher, governing body and business manager monitor the budget carefully and ensure spending decisions are aligned closely to development priorities. The pupil development grant and other grant funding are used purposefully to support the needs of vulnerable learners and are monitored closely.

## 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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