



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

A report on

Ysgol Golwg Y Cwm

**Hendre Ladus
Ystradgynlais
Swansea
Ystradgynlais
SA9 1SE**

Date of inspection: March 2024

by

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

About Ysgol Golwg Y Cwm

Name of provider	Ysgol Golwg Y Cwm
Local authority	Powys County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	215
Pupils of statutory school age	158
Number in nursery classes	33
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 23.7%)	34.2%
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 13.2%)	31.4%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	5.7%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2012
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/12/2015
Start date of inspection	11/03/2024

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

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

Overview

The school has welcoming and supportive family ethos, which is maintained very effectively by all staff. They work together tirelessly to provide excellent care for pupils and their families. The headteacher is a passionate and inspiring leader. She has a clear vision based on providing the best possible opportunities for all pupils within a kind and happy learning community. Governors, leaders and staff at all levels support this vision successfully. This approach leads to confident, thoughtful pupils who trust the adults who care for them.

Most pupils thrive and make good progress. This includes pupils that attend the specialist teaching facilities and those with additional learning needs (ALN). A particularly strong feature of the school is the fact that pupils identified with ALN contribute successfully to the range of pupil groups such as the school council.

Teachers collaborate successfully and ensure that the curriculum builds on pupils' knowledge skills and understanding over time. The curriculum is inclusive and is easily accessible to all, including those with additional needs, those who have English as an additional language or pupils who face socio-economic disadvantage. The school provides effective opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh oracy skills. Welsh is heard and used continuously throughout the day, and this supports pupils' positive attitude towards the language. Across most aspects of their learning pupils make good progress. However, a few activities do not always provide opportunities for them to develop independence as well as they could.

Leaders and staff work closely with a wide range of agencies to ensure excellent support and guidance for pupils and their families. The work of the family liaison officer is key in signposting families to agencies who may be able to provide support in different, often challenging circumstances. Highly skilled teachers and support staff provide an extensive range of interventions designed to support pupils' emotional needs and help them deal with challenging situations.

Recommendations

- R1 Refine provision to ensure that there are consistent opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills

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 working in partnership with a range of agencies to support families and promote pupils' wellbeing, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main evaluation

Learning

During their time at Ysgol Golwg Y Cwm, most pupils thrive and make good progress from their individual starting points. This includes pupils that attend the specialist teaching facility (STF) and those with additional learning needs (ALN).

Around half of pupils enter school with language and communication skills that are below the level expected for their age. They respond well to the routines of the school day and listen attentively. By Year 3, nearly all listen intently to stories and many recap information effectively. For example, pupils describe Mari Jones' journey to buy a Welsh Bible. Most older pupils speak maturely in different situations, for example when discussing local historical links to the slave trade.

Most pupils quickly develop a love of books and reading. In Reception and Year 1, they re-tell familiar stories to one another in the reading area. By Year 4, most pupils read with confidence and accuracy. They read a range of material with appropriate emphasis and enjoyment. By Year 6, most pupils read a range of texts with fluency and accuracy. They use appropriate expression to add tension and excitement to the text.

Most pupils make sound progress in developing their writing skills. The majority of pupils in Reception and Year 1 have a good understanding of the sounds of different letters and a few write simple sentences using a developing understanding of phonics. For example, more confident pupils write their own version of the 'Snail and the Whale' story. As pupils progress through the school, they write for a range of purposes, spell simple words correctly, and use a growing range of punctuation appropriately. By Year 6, many pupils use a valuable range of descriptive vocabulary well. Many older pupils punctuate effectively and most use paragraphs correctly in their extended writing. They write sensitive poems based on the experiences of soldiers in Flanders Fields during World War 1.

Most pupils make effective progress in developing and using their numeracy skills. Many of the youngest pupils count to 10 with increasing accuracy, recognise simple shapes, and sort them into groups. By Year 3, most pupils work accurately with numbers up to 100, for example when adding or multiplying and explain the methods that they use. Most pupils use tally charts to create accurate graphs to represent and interpret information. For example, they create digital graphs, which represent the number of different houses and homes in Ystradgynlais. By Year 6, many older pupils have a good understanding of the value of numbers to 100,000 and add, subtract and multiply accurately. Many pupils understand the value of decimals and have a good understanding of fractions. Many measure accurately and calculate area and perimeter successfully. They construct accurate graphs to record and interpret information. For example, in Year 4 and 5, pupils create line graphs to demonstrate the class attendance for the term.

Most younger pupils access a range of digital resources and software confidently. For example, they look at stories which they access through scanning QR codes. By Year 6, most pupils develop very effective digital skills, often selecting the most

appropriate programs and devices for the task. For example, during 'Genius Hour', pupils research and use a range of programs to communicate what they have learnt. They create games using coding and create films, animations, and fact files. Many use databases and spreadsheets well. For example, when comparing information about the mobile phones that are available in a local superstore, they use formulae to calculate and compare costs.

Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards speaking the Welsh language. Most younger pupils join in enthusiastically with Welsh nursery rhymes, matching actions appropriately to the words they sing. By Years 1 and 2, many pupils have a sound understanding of a suitable range of simple language patterns and vocabulary. A majority of older pupils extend their answers to communicate additional relevant detail when responding to questions.

Most pupils develop strong artistic and creative skills. Many respond enthusiastically to the work of different artists and musicians. For example, they study the work of local Welsh artist, Josef Herman and create their own pastel images based on his style. Nearly all pupils develop good physical skills. Younger pupils enjoy regular opportunities to play using a wide range of equipment such as tunnels and bicycles in the outdoor areas of learning. Older pupils engage enthusiastically in regular physical activity and understand that this is important to keep them healthy as they grow.

Many pupils develop their thinking and problem-solving skills suitably over time. Younger pupils confidently make decisions and choices throughout the school day and decide the order in which they will complete activities. Older pupils develop competent thinking and problem-solving skills as plan their approach to tasks during the 'Genius hour'.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Across the school and despite any social or developmental challenges they may face, pupils feel safe and secure and know who to turn to for help, advice and support if something is worrying them. In class, and during break times and lunch times, pupils are calm and kind with each other. Through the consistent input of adults who care for them, pupils develop a high level of perseverance when undertaking different tasks. Most pupils control their emotions exceptionally well. From a very early age, they share their concerns with staff when something is worrying them. Most pupils understand the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices and know that eating and drinking healthy foods is important. Nearly all understand the importance of staying safe online.

A significant number of pupils assume leadership roles following an election process, which they understand fully. They take great pride in their roles on the school council, the eco council and as digital ambassadors. The school council has raised money to support the local food bank, and has organised a litter pick and a toy swap. Sports ambassadors encourage younger pupils to be active and engage in games during breaktimes. In the younger pupils' classes, pupils learn to take on responsibility when helping the staff with different tasks related to daily routines. The Criw Cymraeg support their peers as they develop their understanding of the language. A particularly strong feature is the fact that pupils identified with ALN play a full and

active part in all the activities of the pupil voice groups. Members of these groups feel strongly that adults at the school respect and value their work.

Nearly all pupils demonstrate a positive attitude to learning. Behaviour in classes and around the school during break and lunch times is exemplary. Pupils treat one another with the utmost respect, and include everyone in activities, whatever challenges they may face. This ensures that pupils feel valued and supports their self-esteem successfully. The younger pupils listen attentively to the teachers and support staff and speak politely with their friends as they undertake different activities. They show excellent self-control and try their best to consider the views and feelings of other pupils in the group. Pupils of all ages learn to be thoughtful and kind, responding positively to the excellent example provided for them by all members of staff.

Many younger pupils learn quickly to make decisions for themselves. They understand that activities are provided for them in the different areas of provision, and access resources that help them to develop their skills. For example, they love accessing Welsh songs on the portable computers which supports their Welsh oracy successfully. Across the age and developmental stages, pupils take pride in their achievements. For example, in the older pupils' STF, many pupils develop confidence when following their partner's instructions on how best to build a structure using blocks. This develops their awareness of providing clear detailed instructions and listening carefully.

Most pupils have a growing understanding of the importance of feedback, either from their peers, or from adults. Most value other pupils' contributions and comment on how well their peers have developed their work, for example when considering the effective use of colour when painting the source of the River Tawe in Years 1 and 2. Likewise, most older pupils collaborate well and provide valuable help for one another, for example when facing a challenge using digital software in Years 5 and 6.

Teaching and learning experiences

Teachers and support staff have high expectations for all pupils. They recognise the importance of maintaining pupils' well-being as the basis and foundation for learning. There are strong relationships between staff and pupils and all staff treat pupils with kindness and respect. Learning support assistants provide effective support for individuals and groups. They show care and concern for every pupils and work well with teachers to ensure the best possible learning experiences for all. Pupil behaviour is managed very well. All staff demonstrate consistency and understanding of each pupil's needs and, when needed, support pupils to manage their behaviour sensitively and with minimum disruption to the learning of others.

Teaching areas are stimulating and engaging. They are well organised and attractively arranged to provide pupils with areas to explore, and also areas to be calm and reflective. The school maximises the use of its extensive outdoor areas for learning, including the school's stimulating 'Forest School' area.

Teachers and staff in the STF classes have suitable training and experience. They use a range of effective approaches to support the development of pupils' learning and well-being. As a result, pupils make good progress with their skills. The school's

vision for the curriculum is based on developing the school as a 'hafan' for the pupils. It promotes high expectations, active learning, nurture, community and the development of lifelong learners. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn about a broad range of engaging themes. Pupils share their views on what they would like to find out and teachers use this information to plan interesting learning experiences.

Teachers plan together to ensure that the curriculum builds on pupils' skills, understanding and knowledge over time. There are worthwhile opportunities to support pupils to make good progress in their literacy, numeracy and digital skills. The curriculum is inclusive and is easily accessible to all pupils, including those with additional needs, those who have English as an additional language and pupils who face challenging socio-economic circumstances.

The school provides effective opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh oracy skills. Welsh is heard and used continuously throughout the day, and this supports pupils' positive attitude towards the language.

The school ensures that pupils experience a range of suitable learning experiences which support their understanding of the world of work. They invite parents and past pupils to discuss their roles, and spark pupils' awareness of the options open to them in future.

There are effective opportunities for pupils to learn about the diverse nature of Wales. For example, older pupils learn about different types of discrimination and use this to explore the impact of gender stereotyping and how they can promote equality. The school's provision for personal and social education is highly effective and ensures that pupils develop a sound understanding of how to support their physical health and emotional well-being. For example, younger pupils make daily healthy food choices, older pupils learn about the changes that occur to their bodies during puberty and all pupils are taught the importance of recognising the importance of sharing their feelings to support their mental health.

Staff establish a highly supportive learning environment in their classrooms. They question the children sensitively, asking probing questions, which encourage the children to think deeply and share their ideas. In line with the curriculum vision, there are many opportunities for pupils become independent and involved in active learning. However, in a few instances, learning experiences are over-directed by adults and this affects pupils' ability to make choices, solve problems and develop their independent learning skills.

Teachers share the expected outcomes or success criteria for lessons with pupils. This makes the learning explicit and helps pupils to assess their own performance and that of their peers effectively. Teachers and support staff provide valuable verbal feedback to support pupils to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Staff use a range of information to assess pupil progress and identify their next steps in learning. Leaders and teachers monitor assessment information regularly to make sure that individuals and groups make good progress and to plan their future support.

Care, support and guidance

The school has a well-established and highly supportive family ethos, which is a fundamental part of its vision and central to its work. All staff work together tirelessly to provide a high level of care for pupils and their families. Staff work together successfully to ensure a consistency of approach across the school. This supports pupils to learn how to express themselves, trust the adults who care for them and build resilience. As a result, they develop as increasingly self-confident, thoughtful individuals.

The family liaison officer collaborates with a wide range of agencies to ensure excellent support and guidance for pupils and their families. Leaders and staff work diligently to signpost families to support agencies who may be able to provide support in different, often challenging circumstances. They work closely with families, supporting with issues such as promoting regular attendance. This support is adapted according to the family's needs and is based on developing parents' awareness of the importance of ensuring that their children attend school regularly.

The staff work closely with partners within the local authority and neighbouring authorities to provide learning opportunities for parents, building their confidence to re-enter the world of work. For example, the school provides opportunities for parents to achieve a professional qualification in food hygiene, which develops their confidence when preparing nourishing meals for their children. They also collaborate with partners to provide useful numeracy classes for parents to support their children's learning at home. This focus on supporting pupils and their families is an outstanding feature of the school.

Highly skilled teachers and support staff provide an extensive range of interventions designed to support pupils' emotional needs. Following a period of action research by staff, it was agreed that creating a calm and safe environment would be beneficial for the pupils, who may be facing a range of social challenges. As a result, leaders created 'Cwtch', which is available to all pupils as required. It provides support for pupils in an emotionally safe environment with a designated member of staff. This helps pupils develop resilience, and the confidence to share what is worrying them.

The school has a well-established nurture group at break, lunchtimes and after school, which provides opportunities for pupils to share their feelings. This in turn builds their resilience to deal with challenges as they arise. Many parents appreciate the provision and feel that it has a significant impact on their child's well-being.

Teachers and learning support assistants provide outstanding support for pupils with ALN. As a result, pupils make good progress and begin to thrive. The highly effective Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator works closely with staff at the school's two specialist teaching facilities to provide excellent support for pupils. This provides a seamless learning journey for pupils accessing the STF classes and ensures that all pupils are equal members of the school community.

Staff maintain pupil records diligently and track progress effectively through a useful online process. They monitor pupil progress according to a range of criteria. These include aspects such as childhood trauma, which ensures that staff have all the

relevant information when making decisions about how best to support pupils' learning.

Mainstream pupils benefit from a range of interventions designed to support their development in skills, alongside building their resilience and self-esteem. The school's highly inclusive ethos ensures that pupils elect a wide range of their peers to represent them on pupil voice groups. Pupils identified as having additional learning needs are well represented and play an important role in decision-making.

The school promotes cultural awareness successfully for example by learning about the experience and challenges faced by refugees who have come to live in the Ystradgynlais area. The older pupils discuss issues such as the history of slavery and the links with the owners of the nearby Ynyscedwyn Iron Works. There are regular and meaningful acts of collective worship, which promote pupils' awareness of fairness and values successfully.

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to enjoy educational visits. For example, the older pupils travelled to the Millenium Centre in Cardiff to see a musical performance, using the financial reward they had received for winning a competition. Teachers provide effective opportunities for pupils to develop creativity through an interesting range of activities. For example, Year 5 pupils learn to play the ukelele and experience playing in a large group together.

There is a very strong culture of safeguarding pupils at the school. Staff at all levels receive appropriate training and have a thorough understanding the processes to ensure that pupils remain safe and well cared for at all times.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is a passionate and inspiring leader. She has a clear vision based on providing the best possible opportunities for all pupils within a kind and happy learning community, where everyone's voice and opinion is respected. This vision is shared successfully with pupils, staff and parents and is reflected fully in the school motto 'Working for excellence, children come first'. The headteacher and senior leaders have very high expectations of themselves and the staff and aspire for all pupils to make strong progress in their skills whilst enjoying their learning experiences. Leaders promote a culture of safeguarding effectively and keeping children safe is a clear priority. As a result, pupils feel safe and comfortable, and have a great sense of pride in their school.

The headteacher is supported by an effective deputy headteacher and a team of dedicated and passionate staff. They work diligently to reach their shared aim of providing a curriculum that inspires and engages all pupils within a nurturing and safe environment for learning. There are robust arrangements for managing staff performance and there is a clear connection between staff development targets and the school's improvement priorities. All of this is underpinned by valuable professional learning opportunities for all members of staff. For example, staff who take on leadership roles greatly value the autonomy that they are given as they carry out personal action research before trialling and evaluating innovative approaches to learning as they develop the school's curriculum.

Leaders have established effective arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the school's work. They analyse a range of first-hand evidence purposefully and, as a result, they have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They implement effective plans that focus well on addressing identified areas for development. In addition, they address national improvement priorities successfully, for example by developing a whole-school approach to implementing Curriculum for Wales. Leaders ensure that the school contributes very effectively to reducing the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on pupils' attainment through innovative social and financial support for pupils and their families. The additional spending funded in collaboration with a local charity to provide vouchers for diverse services such as food, hairdressing and well-being has a significant impact on the quality of life experiences for pupils and their families. Leaders ensure that there are comprehensive arrangements for monitoring progress against the priorities on a regular basis.

Governors are a strong unified team and share the headteacher's vision for an inclusive school based on supporting pupils' well-being and achieving high standards. They undertake a purposeful range of monitoring activities, for example by scrutinising work and taking part in learning walks. As a result, they have a thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They use this information effectively to challenge leaders about pupils' standards, progress, and well-being. Governors work closely with the headteacher to ensure the most appropriate use of resources. They use the pupil development grant diligently to provide programmes that support the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The allocation of additional funds to promote social and emotional skills is a particular strength. Governors ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Building valuable partnerships with parents and the wider community is a clear priority. This is a significant strength, which has a very positive impact on pupils and their families. For example, the school welcomes parents and carers to a Share Our Work Open Day, which is a valuable opportunity to discuss pupil progress and to build parents' confidence to support their children at home. There is a successful culture of proactive and efficient co-operation, which contributes significantly to the school's welcoming and warm ethos.

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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