



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

A report on

Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd

**Llangynwyd
Maesteg
Bridgend
CF34 9RW**

Date of inspection: March 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd

Name of provider	Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd
Local authority	Bridgend County Borough Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	683
Pupils of statutory school age	565
Number in sixth form	118
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%)	15.8%
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%)	2.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	30.7%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/04/2016
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	09/03/2015
Start date of inspection	27/03/2023

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

The headteacher and other leaders have very high expectations of staff and pupils. They promote professional values regularly and lead with sensitivity. There is a familial Welsh atmosphere and a strong ethos of teamwork that permeate the whole school. There is a high level of consistency in the way in which staff perform their duties, which ensures that strong support is available to pupils so that they can achieve their potential.

The quality of teaching is consistently high across the school and there are close and supportive working relationships between pupils and teachers. In most cases, staff plan interesting learning opportunities that provide an appropriately high level of challenge for pupils. They know the pupils well and give them clear feedback on how to improve their work. As a result, many pupils make strong progress in their subject understanding and skills.

The school provides a wide range of courses in key stage 4 and the sixth form, which includes some vocational courses. There is a very wide range of opportunities for pupils to take part in cultural and physical activities.

Pastoral staff promote pupils' personal development very effectively. They work positively with pupils and there is a close and supportive relationship between staff and parents. There is a host of extra-curricular activities to enable pupils to pursue their interests and develop as well-informed citizens. Overall, pupils genuinely enjoy coming to school and attendance levels are notably higher than the national average.

Staff in the additional learning needs (ALN) department and 'Tŷ Derwen' have very high expectations in terms of what pupils can achieve academically and socially. They know their pupils very well and tailor their provision carefully to ensure that they achieve to the best of their ability.

Leaders have a comprehensive picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are ambitious and plan carefully for improvements. There is a strong link between the professional learning activities that are provided for staff and the school's improvement priorities. As a result of inspiring leadership, Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd provides a very positive environment for pupils to thrive academically and develop as well-rounded citizens.

Recommendations

R1 The school should continue with its improvement plans. There are no specific recommendations that arise from this inspection

What happens next

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to:

- Ways in which the school ignites a sense of belonging to the school and how this influences the high levels of well-being and attendance
- Planning for improvement to ensure the best learning experiences for pupils

to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Learning

Over time, many pupils make strong progress in their subject understanding and skills. They recall previous learning correctly and apply it to new situations effectively. In a few cases, pupils make exceptional progress as a result of a very high level of challenge and strong support from their teachers. A few pupils struggle to recall subject concepts and make slow progress in their skills.

Pupils who attend the specialist unit, Tŷ Derwen, make consistent progress in their personal and social skills over time. They develop increasing confidence and resilience, which enables them to cope well in mainstream lessons and foster and maintain valuable relationships with their peers and staff. Most make significant progress in their learning and move forward successfully to the next step in their learning. This is a strong feature.

Many pupils have good oral communication skills in Welsh and English. They have a broad general vocabulary and develop their awareness of subject-specific terminology and how to apply it effectively. When discussing in groups or pairs, most pupils listen attentively to the contributions of their peers and respond constructively and maturely. A few pupils have sophisticated vocabulary and communicate eloquently in both languages. A few pupils lack confidence when presenting their responses orally in Welsh. They have a tendency to use too many English words and incorrect syntax.

When they are given an opportunity to do so, many pupils read aloud skilfully and vary their tone and expression. A few struggle when they encounter unfamiliar words and have a tendency to read aloud in a monotonous manner. Most pupils use their reading skills to gather relevant information from texts. They demonstrate a good understanding of what they read and many discuss the ideas that derive from the texts sensibly, for example when considering the role of women during the Second World War in their humanities lessons. Many are able to synthesise information from a range of texts successfully.

Many pupils express their ideas clearly when writing at length in many subjects. In a majority of cases, pupils write in Welsh and English without many grammatical or spelling errors. Many pupils develop their creative skills well in writing, for example by creating a monologue based on the novel '*Llyfr Glas Nebo*'. At times, a minority of pupils use English syntax when writing in Welsh. The writing of these pupils often includes a few spelling and mutation errors.

Many pupils have a good understanding of number concepts. They are able to calculate confidently with negative numbers, decimals, fractions and numbers in the standard form. They construct and plot line graphs correctly and add valid lines of best fit. When appropriate, they create graphs in other subjects and demonstrate sophisticated analytical skills. For example, they analyse complex mobility graphs skilfully in their science lessons. Many pupils apply formulae to discover specific quantities, such as speed or density, successfully. They also develop their ability to reorganise formulae and apply this skill in a variety of contexts skilfully across the curriculum.

On the whole, pupils develop their physical skills and fitness well in their health and well-being lessons. They also develop their fine motor skills in their technology, art and science lessons when handling a range of equipment and tools. They develop their creativity well in several subjects, for example by creating imaginative expressive portraits in their art lessons.

In many cases, pupils develop their thinking skills well, for example when considering the links between different mathematical concepts. In their modern foreign languages lessons, they analyse and interpret vocabulary by considering cognate words.

Overall, pupils in the sixth form are mature and conscientious. Many develop sophisticated thinking skills when dealing with complex topics, for example when studying how magnets induce a current in their physics lessons. They communicate eloquently and make astute links between different subject concepts. In a very few cases, pupils do not have a sound enough grasp of basic concepts and do not develop their subject understanding well enough.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils take pride in being part of the school family, namely 'Team Llan', and benefit from its safe, caring, close-knit and inclusive community. They feel that they are respected and treated fairly and, in turn, show a high level of consideration and respect towards the school, their peers, staff and visitors.

Most pupils feel safe at school and free from physical and verbal abuse. They know whom to approach when something is worrying them. As a result, these pupils are happy at school and confident that any issues relating to bullying are dealt with quickly, effectively and sensitively. Pupils appreciate the support that is available from heads of year, counsellors and support staff at the Llannerch and Tŷ Derwen centres.

The way in which most pupils embrace the principles and characteristics of 'Llan Learners' (successful, leading and strong) is a strength. In lessons, they foster the mindset of being successful individuals and demonstrate resilience when solving problems. They develop to become ambitious individuals and take pride in their successes. Most show an interest in their work and a majority respond positively to feedback from their teachers to make further progress. Nearly all pupils arrive punctually for their lessons. Most behave very well in lessons and around the school. These pupils understand and value the importance of rules, rewards and corrective action. Overall, pupils have healthy attitudes towards the Welsh language and use it spontaneously in conversations with each other. This is a strong feature. These features contribute significantly to the pupils' enjoyment of coming to school. As a result, pupils' attendance rates, including those who are eligible for free school meals, are notably higher than the national average.

Most pupils develop their leadership skills when discussing current affairs, rights and responsibilities during the 'Codi Llais' tutor sessions. They develop as knowledgeable and ethical citizens, for example by organising fundraising activities for a range of charities. Most learn how to make wise decisions to keep themselves healthy. Pupils in key stage 4 value the opportunity to choose specific activities in mandatory physical education lessons. As a result, they participate enthusiastically in these lessons. Pupils who need additional support develop valuable life skills through

alternative activities, for example *'Taith y Gweilch'*. These activities help to nurture their self-confidence and self-respect.

Pupils benefit from appropriate opportunities to express their views through year forums and the school Senedd. Through pupil's voice activities, such as subject questionnaires, they have given feedback on, and contributed to, changes to units of work. Through the pupil's voice, the school created the charities committee and the equality committee.

Sixth-form pupils are commendable ambassadors for the school. They are friendly and speak maturely, respectfully and confidently with visitors, staff and pupils of all ages. They make a valuable contribution to school life and many undertake leadership roles. They chair and guide the school Senedd and are responsible for establishing and leading clubs, such as 'Read with Pride', an LGBTQ+ literature reading group. Sixth-form pupils are wholly responsible for the Lesson 6 clubs each Friday, when all key stage 3 pupils attend a club of their choice. As a result, they develop valuable leadership and organisational skills.

Teaching and learning experiences

The quality of teaching is robust due to consistency in the effective features that can be seen across the school. This means that many pupils make strong progress in their knowledge and skills.

Nearly all teachers have sound subject knowledge and know their pupils very well. In a few lessons, where teaching is at its best and very effective, teachers maintain an extremely productive working relationship and have very high expectations of pupils' engagement, effort and attainment. They ask probing questions that make pupils think deeply and make proficient development in their understanding. As a result of these strong features, pupils pay attention continuously, contribute well orally and make very swift and solid progress.

In most lessons, teachers have positive and effective classroom management. They forge a productive and supportive working relationship with pupils and succeed in maintaining a purposeful work environment. In these lessons, teachers plan successfully to ensure that pupils make progress in their skills and subject knowledge. They are influential language models who promote regular use of the Welsh language, subject vocabulary and polished language. They provide appropriate resources that support teaching and learning and use classroom assistants effectively, where necessary.

In many lessons, teachers give clear explanations and instructions when explaining concepts. They ensure that tasks provide an appropriate level of challenge and encourage pupils to work independently and take responsibility for their own learning. They question pupils regularly to check their understanding, hold their interest in the work and ensure that they move forward in their learning. As a result of these attributes, the rate of learning is brisk and sound in many lessons.

In the majority of lessons, teachers develop opportunities for pupils to give extended answers, further explanations or to think about concepts more deeply. A majority of teachers provide beneficial comments on pupils' written work and, overall, this helps them to make further progress in subsequent work. However, the quality of feedback

on pupils' work varies within and across departments and there are no consistent expectations in terms of how pupils should respond to comments from teachers.

In a few cases, shortcomings in teachers' planning mean that pupils do not make as much progress as they could. These include a lack of variety in tasks or tasks that do not provide enough challenge. Often in these cases, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their oral skills and independent learning skills further because the teacher talks too much or controls the learning too much. In a very few cases, teachers do not question pupils often enough or probingly enough and their expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough.

The school provides a broad curriculum and ensures rich learning experiences for pupils across the range of ability. Staff plan these experiences skilfully to meet the needs and interests of pupils and ensure that tasks build on each other systematically. The school is planning carefully to introduce the Curriculum for Wales and ensures rich learning experiences for pupils by prioritising the quality of teaching in lessons. Staff work beneficially with staff in the partner primary schools to ensure progression for pupils.

Pupils in key stage 4 can choose from a wide range of courses, including vocational ones such as construction. The school works in partnership with another secondary school to increase the choice of subjects for pupils in the sixth form.

The school plans strategically to develop pupils' skills. Planning to develop pupils' numeracy skills is an exceptional feature. For example, in science, working together to ensure consistency in numeracy provision has led to an effective strategy in using and rearranging formulae and pupils use this successfully in their work. Staff plan effectively to develop pupils' literacy skills. For example, strategies to develop oracy as part of the '*Llais Llan*' programme have a positive influence on pupils' communication skills. There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills in many subjects. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to apply their digital skills across the curriculum.

The school gives keen attention to developing a sense of Welshness and Welsh identity among its pupils in a positive and inclusive way. The school sets high aspirations for developing pupils' Welsh language skills. The school has useful strategies to reinforce the understanding of pupils and parents of Welsh subject terminology. Activities during the 'club lesson' provide valuable opportunities for learners to use their Welsh in natural and informal contexts.

The school's strategic planning to develop pupils' personal and social skills is sound, for example the challenge days, the skills challenge certificate and the '*Codi Llais*' programme during tutor periods. Through these, the school maintains a comprehensive programme to develop pupils' understanding of how to live healthily and safely and how to take care of their own well-being and that of others. Where appropriate, subjects plan carefully to develop pupils' empathy and understanding of rights and equality. For example, Year 7 pupils study historic and modern slavery in their humanities lessons and challenge sex discrimination in their English lessons.

The school provides a very broad range of extra-curricular activities, ensuring equal access for all pupils by organising additional buses home at the end of the school day. The school reinforces the curriculum by organising educational visits, such as a trip to Island Farm, a prisoner of war camp that saw the largest escape on British soil.

Care, support and guidance

Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd is an extremely caring, inclusive and familial community. All staff promote and encourage pupils to develop and adopt positive attitudes. For example, during *'Wythnos Clod'* praise week, the inclusion and well-being team recognises and celebrates the successes of individual pupils by rewarding them appropriately. These include the *'Dysgwr Llan'*, *'Pencampwr Llan'* and *'Cymro Llan'* awards and the 'Headteacher's Award'.

Staff have developed a successful system for tracking and improving attendance following the challenges after the pandemic. Regular co-operation with the county's education and well-being officer, in addition to the recent appointment of the family liaison officer, ensure a swift response to absences. This contributes to high levels of attendance in comparison with the national picture.

Llannerch is a haven for pupils. The care and support from the staff there are a useful way of forging a strong relationship with pupils and their families. The school has provided a host of interventions to support pupils with emotional, social and behavioural needs. This motivates pupils to foster more positive attitudes towards their work and try to get the most out of school life.

The inclusion and well-being team works closely with a variety of external agencies, such as children's services, the nurse and a counsellor, as and when necessary. Visits by the police to hold talks about local and current affairs reinforce the personal and social support for pupils.

The school has effective procedures for identifying pupils' needs at an early stage through strong transition arrangements. Staff from the inclusion and well-being team create an early link with families, which provides a firm foundation to begin the journey in comprehensive school.

Pupils who are affected by socio-economic disadvantage benefit from practical support, for example an opportunity to receive school uniform vouchers or an education pack that includes equipment and a dictionary. The school Senedd meets regularly to discuss how to improve the school and provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to influence school life.

The school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development appropriately. This is done through assemblies and *'Codi Llais'* sessions, which are also a means of promoting oral skills by discussing current themes to develop pupils' awareness of the world around them. The designated challenge days deal with current affairs tailored for each individual year group. Pupils are given a beneficial opportunity to reflect and discuss their feelings through weekly *'Lles Llun'* well-being sessions.

The school has robust arrangements to support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). This includes detailed and careful planning before pupils transfer to the school from their partner primary schools. There are robust arrangements for gathering information about the progress of pupils in the mainstream and those who receive additional support. There are also effective systems to identify learning difficulties as pupils move through the school. The school provides a wide range of beneficial interventions to support pupils with weak literacy and numeracy skills. Valuable sessions are also provided to support pupils with emotional and behavioural problems.

Under the robust and effective leadership of the ALN co-ordinator (ALNCo) and deputy ALNCo, a team of teachers and assistants work together successfully to support pupils' development and well-being. This includes providing teachers with valuable guidance to ensure that they plan suitable tasks for specific pupils and support them to make progress. An excellent feature is the team's high expectations that pupils with ALN succeed academically and socially so that they are ready for the next stage of their lives.

Provision at the Tŷ Derwen specialist centre is purposeful and effective. The unit's staff provide valuable support for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. As a result of relevant support and encouragement, these pupils enjoy and succeed in a significant variety of learning experiences and play a full part in school life.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the whole school community. The headteacher, staff and governors maintain an ethos of respect and civilised behaviour, placing a clear emphasis on forging close and supportive relationships with pupils and their families. Appropriate and regular training is organised for staff and governors on child protection and safeguarding processes and other important issues. As a result, staff have a sound understanding of their responsibilities and how to respond to any concerns about pupils' safety. Relevant leaders co-operate with statutory external agencies in an informed manner and this ensures a swift and appropriate response to support vulnerable pupils. They also work sensibly with parents to support their children's well-being.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is an inspiring and modest leader who is very well respected among the staff and the school community. He leads people skilfully to be the best that they can be and does so considerately and with empathy. Together, the headteacher and the school's senior leaders have a clear vision that is rooted in an ethos of co-operation to ensure that there are no barriers to success. They convey this vision very eloquently and succeed in persuading staff by being exceptional role models.

Senior leaders have high expectations of all pupils and staff. They uphold professional values and expectations in every aspect of their work. Their key responsibilities are allocated appropriately and sensibly. Through careful co-operation, they act strategically and prioritise improving pupils' experiences and maintaining high levels of progress. Senior leaders succeed in nurturing a team that has a healthy mindset of continuous self-improvement, with a clear focus on teaching and learning. As a result, staff and pupils are proud to be members of the 'Team Llan' community.

Middle leaders have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in addressing the school's key priorities. The school's accountability procedures are clear. Through regular meetings, line managers hold middle leaders to account for their work effectively and challenge and support them in a balanced manner. This means that discussions place a firm focus on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.

The way in which leaders evaluate the effect of their work and planning for improvement is a notable strength. They gather a wide variety of information to evaluate the quality of provision. This includes analyses of internal and external data,

lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and seeking the views of parents and pupils. They use all of this information skilfully to measure the effect of provision on pupils' well-being and progress. This means that most leaders have a detailed and sound understanding of the strengths within provision and the areas for improvement and prioritise wisely in planning improvement. As a result, this has led to a teaching of a consistently high quality, an increase in attendance levels and the positive attitudes of most pupils towards their learning.

Leaders address local and national priorities purposefully. One strong feature of this is the way in which all of the school's staff are committed to using the Welsh language and promoting Welshness every day. Staff at all levels do everything they can to ensure that all pupils have the same opportunities, whatever their background.

The school has a comprehensive programme of professional learning activities for all staff. There is a close link between this programme, the performance management arrangements and the school's improvement processes. The staff performance management system, namely the 'Continuous Professional Development Plan', is thorough and organised. The objectives are clear, link to the school's priorities and are reviewed regularly. As part of this work, there are useful opportunities for staff at all levels to experiment with new strategies based on research. There are regular opportunities to celebrate and share their findings and best practices that have been identified from self-evaluation activities. The programme has also been tailored carefully to respond to the school's priorities and the individual needs of staff. The school has succeeded in creating a culture where staff are keen to receive feedback on their work and staff feel that they are supported well to develop in their roles. The professional learning programme has had a notable effect on the quality of teaching, provision for well-being and staff leadership skills.

The headteacher, business manager and governors monitor and manage the budget carefully. They use any additional grants, such as the pupil development grant, appropriately to support pupils, ensure fair opportunities and improve the quality of their educational and social experiences.

The governing body provides strong support for all of the school's work. Under the robust guidance of the chair and vice chair, the governing body is very knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have a good grasp of the main priorities and play a key role in setting the school's strategic direction. Throughout, they operate effectively in their role as a critical friend and challenge senior and middle leaders on important issues, where appropriate. They fulfil their statutory role of promoting healthy eating and drinking effectively.

The school's staff have an excellent relationship with parents and the wider community. They communicate effectively by sharing key information in a timely manner and celebrate pupils' successes. Pupils and parents are given beneficial opportunities to express their views on different aspects and leaders make key decisions based on any findings. The school leads and contributes effectively to a number of strategic partnerships with schools and other partners to improve the care and experiences for pupils.

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/members of the management committee 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, middle leaders, 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
- visit a broad sample of lessons, including learning support groups and the specialist resource base (where appropriate), 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 (where appropriate) and in outdoor areas
- visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning (where appropriate)
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs
- 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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