



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

**A report on**  
**Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed**

**Duffryn Way  
Duffryn  
Newport  
NP20 5QS**

**Date of inspection: May 2022**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh.**

## About Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed

Name of provider	Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed
Local authority	Newport
Language of the provider	Welsh-medium
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	451
Pupils of statutory school age	451
Number in sixth form (if applicable)	-
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the secondary sector is 18.7%)</i>	16.4%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the secondary sector is 21.7%)</i>	25.7%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	9.3%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	-
Start date of inspection	09/05/2022
Additional information	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different from 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 school's SEN/ALN register.

## Overview

Many pupils at Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed are proud to be a part of the school community. They get on well and respect each other's points of view. Overall, they benefit from purposeful opportunities to develop their understanding of Welsh culture and traditions. Many pupils behave well in lessons. They work productively with their teachers, work diligently throughout the lesson and respond constructively to verbal and written feedback. A few pupils do not show positive attitudes to learning, which means that they do not make sufficient progress. On the whole, strategic planning to develop provision for wellbeing and inclusion is not robust enough to ensure that teachers and leaders work proactively enough to address these issues.

A strong feature of the school's provision is the opportunities for pupils to develop their oral skills. Many pupils express themselves effectively and offer good extended answers when responding to questions or when presenting an opinion during a discussion. The school's leaders have worked together effectively to ensure staff's professional development to support the teaching of oracy skills and the effect of this can be seen in lessons. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to use their reading, writing and numeracy skills across the curriculum. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their higher-order reading skills and digital competence.

In many lessons, teachers plan activities that challenge pupils suitably. In these lessons, pupils make appropriate progress in their subject skills. The lesson's tasks build sensibly, which means that there is a suitable pace to learning. In a few lessons where pupils make swift progress, teachers adapt the pace of learning skilfully to respond to pupils' needs. These teachers plan their lessons expertly to ensure that all pupils make strong progress.

Since being appointed in June 2020, the headteacher has worked diligently with the deputy head to ensure the smooth running of the school through the challenging period of the pandemic. They have also managed the school while work has been ongoing to complete the buildings. Due to the building work, pupils have little space to socialise and play outside.

The school has self-evaluation processes that include beneficial activity, such as lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work, and findings feed appropriately into school improvement plans. However, systems for gathering information to evaluate the school's work do not focus specifically enough on pupils' progress and skills nor the quality of provision.

## **Recommendations**

- R1 Strengthen leadership capacity to ensure that leaders across the school operate more strategically in their areas of responsibility
- R2 Strengthen provision for inclusion and pupils' additional learning needs
- R3 Ensure more cohesive provision to develop pupils' reading, numeracy and digital competence skills
- R4 Strengthen leaders' ability to evaluate the quality of provision in light of its effect on pupils' learning, skills and wellbeing
- R5 Respond to the health and safety issue that was identified during the inspection

## **What happens next**

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

## Main findings

### Learning

Overall, many pupils at Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed make appropriate progress in their subject skills during their time at the school. They can recall previous learning well, on the whole, and build on this appropriately. A few pupils do not make enough progress in their lessons. This is mainly due to their attitudes to learning.

Many pupils listen attentively to their teachers. They also listen respectfully to their fellow pupils' contributions when working in pairs or groups. Many pupils express themselves confidently when discussing and presenting an opinion orally. They have a sound general and subject-specific vocabulary in Welsh and English. They often give extended answers to explain their views when responding to the teacher's questions or when contributing to a discussion. They use sentence structures provided by their teachers effectively to develop their oral skills. A few pupils communicate their ideas articulately. For example, in English lessons, pupils provide mature and intelligent explanations, acknowledge the views of their peers and produce counter-arguments when discussing how advertisements use stereotypes to appeal to an audience.

A majority of pupils use appropriate strategies to find facts and gather information when reading a suitable variety of texts. When given an opportunity to do so, many pupils read aloud effectively and vary their tone of voice and speed appropriately. A few more able pupils have sophisticated higher-order reading skills. They recognise style features and discuss their effect on the reader skilfully. However, pupils across the range of ability do not develop their higher-order reading skills soundly enough.

Overall, pupils write fluently and express themselves appropriately. However, a minority of pupils' work is littered with spelling errors and awkward syntax. A majority of pupils have a suitable grasp of subject-specific vocabulary and organise their work carefully into paragraphs. A few pupils have a rich vocabulary and express themselves highly effectively. They structure their work skilfully to have an effect on the reader. For example, pupils use the style features of writing depictions proficiently when writing about 'Taid' in their Welsh lessons.

Many pupils develop their number skills appropriately, for example when using the four number rules. They produce graphs using axes and scales correctly. Around half of pupils calculate and use percentages and fractions confidently and when exchanging between them. A few pupils have strong number skills. For example, in their physics lessons, they can produce waveforms with a specific frequency and wavelength and calculate their speed. However, a few pupils make basic calculation errors.

Many pupils use their basic information and communication technology skills suitably to produce presentations and undertake word processing. Around half of pupils show a basic understanding of coding.

Overall, many pupils develop their physical skills appropriately. For example, in their physical education lessons, pupils develop their understanding of the importance of

posture to improve their sprinting technique. Many pupils develop suitable creative skills, for example by experimenting with typography and different media to create graffiti in their art lessons.

Overall, pupils in the sixth form express themselves effectively orally when discussing their work and their contribution to school life. Most undertake their work conscientiously to prepare for external examinations.

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

The supportive ethos at Ysgol Gwent Is Coed promotes pupils' wellbeing successfully. As a result, many pupils are proud and happy to be members of this community. They get on well with their peers and staff and communicate politely and confidently with adults and visitors. They are patient and respect each other's views when working together in pairs and groups.

Pupils benefit from valuable opportunities to develop their understanding of Welsh culture and traditions, for example by competing in Eisteddfodau. Nearly all pupils took part in the school's virtual Eisteddfod recently. Pupils at the 'Immersion Centre' for pupils from English-medium primary schools benefit from the linguistic support, which enables them to move to mainstream lessons quickly.

Many pupils feel safe at the school and believe that they are treated fairly. They are aware of whom to approach if they are concerned about anything and are confident that the school's staff will respond appropriately. A majority of pupils feel that the teachers know them well and take care of them with empathy. A majority of pupils have a suitable understanding of how to stay safe online.

A majority of pupils enjoy taking part in an appropriate range of extra-curricular clubs. They appreciate the positive effect of these activities on their emotional and physical wellbeing. However, a few pupils express concern about the lack of space that is available to them both inside and outside the building during break times and lunchtimes.

The school council makes a suitable contribution to the school's improvement decisions. For example, it has contributed to the 'Code of Conduct'. The Eco Council works successfully with the school's canteen staff to reduce the use of plastic and has ensured that additional bins have been placed around the site. The '*Hawl i Hunaniaeth*' ('Right to an Identity') group was established by the pupils themselves to promote and celebrate fairness and equality. Since being established, the group has taken part in a number of purposeful projects. This includes organising a stall to raise awareness and raise money to erect a statue of Lady Rhondda, a local heroine who played a leading role with the Suffragettes. Pupils in the sixth form play a valuable leading role; for example, they organise fun-filled activities to reward younger pupils for their contribution to the school.

Many pupils behave well in lessons. They arrive on time, settle quickly and show a willingness to learn. They work productively with their teachers and fellow pupils, take pride in their work and respond maturely to feedback. These pupils are hard-working and concentrate throughout the lesson. However, a few pupils do not show positive

attitudes to learning. They are too passive and reluctant to contribute to activities. The behaviour of a very few pupils disrupts lessons regularly.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not be reporting on pupil attendance rates during the 2021-2022 academic year. However, inspectors will consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

## **Teaching and learning experiences**

Many teachers have a close and productive working relationship with pupils. They provide beneficial encouragement to motivate pupils to work diligently in their lessons. They succeed in communicating the aims and objectives of their lessons clearly and have good subject knowledge. A majority of teachers are good language models and introduce purposeful subject vocabulary and terminology to enrich pupils' oral and written responses. These teachers also present effective structures to develop and extend pupils' oral skills.

In a majority of lessons, teachers plan activities that challenge pupils appropriately and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Tasks build sensibly on each other. These means that lessons have a suitable pace. They plan and provide appealing resources to support teaching and learning.

In a few lessons where pupils make strong and swift progress, teachers plan very effectively to provide interesting and stimulating activities to ensure that pupils develop their oracy and subject skills. These teachers have an infectious enthusiasm and inspire pupils to work to the best of their ability. They adapt the pace of learning skilfully to respond to pupils' needs.

In the few lessons where pupils' progress is not as good, teachers do not manage pupils' behaviour well enough. These teachers do not plan tasks carefully enough to meet pupils' needs. Tasks are not challenging enough or are not adapted appropriately to support weaker pupils. There are shortcomings in the pace of learning and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to contribute to or lead activities.

A majority of teachers ask questions regularly to check pupils' knowledge, monitor their progress and move learning forward. They walk around the classroom and intervene purposefully to support learning, where necessary. They provide constructive oral feedback on the standard of pupils' work and their effort. However, a minority of teachers do not ask probing enough questions to probe pupils' thoughts and develop their understanding. In a few cases, they answer for pupils or miss opportunities for pupils to show their understanding.

A majority of teachers provide useful written feedback on pupils' work and give specific comments to support them to improve their work. There are purposeful opportunities, through the '*cyfnod coch*', for pupils to respond to the teacher's comments and reflect on the quality of their work. In a few cases, the teacher does not give enough attention to correcting spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors and, as a result, pupils repeat the same mistakes.

The school provides an appropriate curriculum in key stage 3, with clear plans that identify pupils' starting points following the lockdown periods. A minority of subjects choose very appealing themes to hold pupils' attention and respond to their interests, and this inspires them to produce extended work of a good standard. For example, in their Welsh lessons, pupils discuss homelessness and are proud of their work writing a monologue as a homeless person.

There is a suitable range of general and vocational courses in key stage 4, with options that meet many pupils' needs and lead to appropriate qualifications. The school works effectively with other local schools to extend the post-16 offer to respond to demand from pupils for particular subjects. There are suitable opportunities for pupils to use the Welsh language informally through a few sports and cultural activities.

The headteacher has developed and shared a vision clearly with staff to introduce the Curriculum for Wales from September 2022. However, preparations and planning are inconsistent across the subjects.

The school plans and takes action well to develop pupils' oral skills. The '*Llafar Llwyddiannus*' oracy programme is embedded across the lessons and morning periods and ensures high expectations of each individual's oral skills. As a result of the consistent work across the curriculum, many pupils have good oral skills in Welsh and English. Teachers plan purposefully to develop pupils' reading and writing skills in Welsh and English. The school has planned appropriately to develop pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum in Year 7, but this has not been extended to other years. The school has not planned enough opportunities for pupils to develop their digital competence.

The school prioritises developing pupils' understanding and equality and fairness. There are valuable opportunities for them to study these aspects across the curriculum. The contribution of pupils from the '*Hawl i Hunaniaeth*' group when planning personal and social education (PSE) lessons is a strength. These pupils have planned lessons to support their fellow pupils to celebrate diversity, for example by considering the experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and LGBTQ+ people. The morning programme is planned skilfully to include language development activities that enable pupils to discuss current topics eloquently.

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

Ysgol Gwent Is Coed is an inclusive and friendly school. Overall, staff know the pupils well and give priority to supporting their wellbeing. As a result, many pupils have positive attitudes to learning and wellbeing.

The school has an appropriate personal and social education (PSE) programme and useful aspects within this programme support pupils' emotional and social development. However, this does not have a positive enough influence on the behaviour of a few pupils in lessons and around the school. The school provides some useful interventions and additional support to help pupils with emotional needs or behavioural difficulties. For example, the '*Cwtsh*' room provides a safe space and valuable support for a limited number of vulnerable pupils. This supports them to be ready to learn and helps them to cope with their work. The school uses a restorative

approach to responding to incidents of misbehaviour to ensure that pupils understand the effect of their actions on others. This system is beginning to have a positive influence on the behaviour of a few pupils.

Wellbeing leaders work effectively with external agencies to respond to specific difficulties and provide a small number of pupils with relevant support. However, provision to support these pupils is limited, overall.

Since being appointed in April 2021, the additional learning needs (ALN) coordinator has provided staff with training and shared beneficial information to help them to understand their responsibility in terms of realising the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018. However, the ALN coordinator's role has not been developed in full. The school has an up-to-date provision map that outlines the nature of support for pupils with ALN, but the school is not able to provide a wide range of interventions for these pupils due to lack of resources. The school works suitably with a few specialist external agencies to support pupils with more profound learning needs. One-page profiles include relevant information about pupils.

Teachers' use of the information in these profiles to plan lessons is beginning to develop.

The school provides suitable opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school and the wider community. The school council makes a beneficial contribution to improving the school environment. However, the school's council's influence on the quality of teaching is limited.

There are appropriate arrangements for collective worship, including opportunities for pupils to develop robust values when discussing their ethical and spiritual beliefs. For example, when discussing the rights of refugees and inequality during registration periods.

The school provides an appropriate range of extra-curricular clubs and activities that promote a healthy lifestyle and give pupils a good opportunity to develop socially. Year 6 pupils in the cluster and Year 7 pupils at Ysgol Gwent Is Coed work together enthusiastically to prepare a presentation at the theatre in Newport. The school provides a good range of valuable educational trips, including foreign skiing trips and to Belgium. More local trips and an annual residential trip for Year 7 pupils are also organised to promote Welsh heritage and immerse pupils in the Welsh language.

Overall, the school promotes a suitable culture of safeguarding. Leaders ensure that there is an appropriate level of training for staff so that they understand their responsibility to protect children. There is a suitable referral procedure in place when there is a safeguarding concern regarding a pupil and sensitive information is kept appropriately. However, there are health and safety issues in relation to the site. The playing field is quite a distance from the main building, which leads to challenges in terms of supervision as there is no fence around the field and it is open to the public.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher was appointed during the first national lockdown in June 2020. Since being appointed, in addition to the significant challenges as a result of the pandemic, she has faced other significant challenges in terms of staffing issues and

disruptive building work as the school grows and develops. This has hindered her ability and that of other leaders to develop a few important aspects of the school's work.

The headteacher has a clear vision that is based on celebrating Welshness and Welsh language education. She aims to develop pupils who take pride in their local community and recognise it as a unique area of Wales in terms of culture, society and history. One of the school's main objectives is to encourage the best possible co-operation between all members of the school community. The headteacher conveys her vision and the school's objectives clearly with all stakeholders.

The headteacher is a modest and hard-working leader who gives of her best to support the wellbeing of the whole school community. She is supportive of her staff and works diligently to ensure fairness and support for everyone. The headteacher is supported well by the deputy head and the extended senior team, 'The Steering Team', contributes suitably to the school's strategic direction. The headteacher has many responsibilities and this limits her ability to operate strategically. Throughout the school, leaders do not operate proactively enough and this means that a great deal of time is spent responding to day-to-day issues. Strategic planning to strengthen provision for inclusion and additional learning needs is appropriate but is in the early stages of development.

Appropriate attention is given to national priorities, such as reducing the effects of poverty on pupils' educational attainment and improving their skills. For example, the school has worked productively to raise pupils' standards of oracy through the cross-school '*Llafar Llwyddiannus*' oracy initiative. As a result, many pupils are eloquent Welsh speakers who contribute well orally to lessons. However, planning opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills in informal situations is not cohesive enough. The school has begun to plan strategically to introduce the Curriculum for Wales, but preparations are inconsistent across the subjects.

Regular line management meetings are held at all levels. These meetings follow a common procedure and agenda. Overall, leaders and staff hold beneficial and productive talks on many aspects of the school's work. However, discussions about pupils' standards across the school and the quality of teaching are not consistent enough features in management meetings. Performance management arrangements are appropriate and the objectives are in line with the school's main priorities, in addition to supporting the professional development and personal aspirations of staff. The headteacher deals fairly and appropriately with underperforming staff.

Throughout the lockdown periods during the pandemic, there was frequent and beneficial communication between the school and parents, and families were given valuable support. On the whole, the school continues to develop a constructive relationship with parents, but leaders do not seek their views about the school's work regularly enough.

Governors understand their roles and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, on the whole. They are passionate about the school and about ensuring Welsh-medium education in the county of Newport. They ensure appropriate arrangements for eating and drinking healthily. Their role as critical friends is developing suitably. Governors,

the headteacher and the business manager manage the school's resources carefully. They make purposeful use of grants, including the Pupil Development Grant.

The school has a purposeful calendar of self-evaluation that outlines activities and important dates. These are implemented regularly and all of the school's leaders are involved in the process. Activities includes useful processes to scrutinise pupils' work and check the quality of teaching. Leaders are beginning to experiment with the learner's voice as a means of seeking views. Although the school monitors provision through these activities, it focuses mainly on consistency and compliance procedures. For example, book reviews check whether there are opportunities for pupils to complete '*cyfnod coch*' assessment activities, rather than the effect of these activities on their work. Overall, leaders do not focus in enough detail on pupils' standards and the effect teaching has on developing their skills and subject progress.

Overall, there is a suitable link between the findings of the school's self-evaluation processes and the main priorities for improvement. The school improvement plan responds to the effect of the pandemic and gives due attention to improving standards of teaching and identifying pupils' wellbeing needs. However, actions are not always incisive enough to raise pupils' standards. Some priorities focus too much on the results of external examinations rather than the standards and progress of all pupils in lessons and over time.

The school works diligently to create a strong culture of professional learning. A valuable feature of this is the opportunities for teachers to work in forums to enrich their understanding of successful teaching and experiment with ideas based on research. The school is beginning the process of measuring the effect of this training on standards and the quality of provision. Staff are given extensive opportunities to attend courses by external providers and contribute to networks. However, leaders do not plan strategically enough to ensure that this training links with the school's needs and priorities.

## **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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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