



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

A report on

Ysgol Uwchradd Glan Clwyd

**Denbigh Road
St Asaph
LL17 0RP**

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 Uwchradd Glan Clwyd

Name of provider	Ysgol Uwchradd Glan Clwyd
Local authority	Denbighshire County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	1034
Pupils of statutory school age	926
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	0
Number in the sixth form	108
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 18.5%)</i>	7.3%
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 23%)</i>	21.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	56.2%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	November 2012

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

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

Overview

Ysgol Uwchradd Glan Clwyd is a caring and inclusive community where pupils' wellbeing is a key priority. Staff meet pupils' emotional, health and social needs and provide them with clear guidance throughout their journey at the school. Staff from the '*Tîm Cynnal*' ('Support Team') and the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) team through the Elwy Centre have comprehensive knowledge of individual pupils' needs and work together closely to support pupils' emotional, social and behavioural needs.

Overall, many pupils have positive attitudes to school life and most feel safe. Pupils behave well in many lessons and show enthusiasm and a desire to learn. However, in a minority of lessons, pupils do not listen attentively enough and disrupt their teachers and peers at times. Members of the sixth form have very positive attitudes towards the school. They behave very maturely and contribute extensively to the school's life and work.

The pupil's voice has a prominent place in the community of Ysgol Uwchradd Glan Clwyd. The school council and various committees make very valuable contributions to the school's work. The '*Panel Parch a Charedigrwydd*' ('Respect and Kindness Panel'), which is led by the sixth form, is a live example of the importance that is placed on equal rights. Pupils also have opportunities to mentor and support their peers. Pupils are therefore given valuable opportunities to develop their leadership skills and develop as ethical and principled citizens who contribute fully to school life.

Overall, pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills soundly, although opportunities to expand on this across the curriculum are limited. Most pupils have benefitted greatly from opportunities to develop their digital skills and take advantage of beneficial opportunities to extend and develop their talents further.

While there are strengths in the quality of teaching across the school, there are common shortcomings in the expectations of a minority of teachers. Overall, activities in their lessons do not provide enough challenge for pupils. The expectations of a minority of teachers are also not high enough in terms of behaviour or pupils' use of the Welsh language.

In key stage 4 and the sixth form, there is a wide range of interesting courses from which pupils can choose, including some that correspond to local industries. There is a very wide range of valuable extra-curricular experiences available for pupils to enrich their learning experiences further. The immersion course that supports pupils who transfer from English-medium education at a very late stage to develop their Welsh language skills is highly effective. These pupils receive valuable support and encouragement to ensure that they benefit fully from the school's life and curriculum.

The headteacher provides passionate and supportive leadership for the school's future and places significant weight on fostering a caring and supportive ethos. Leaders demonstrate clear commitment to the school community and have succeeded in developing a caring ethos and a robust safeguarding culture. They have not prioritised carefully enough to ensure that their improvement work targets the aspects that are most in need of attention. Although management systems are

suitable, they do not interweave effectively enough to support the school's improvement journey.

Recommendations

- R1 Raise the expectations of pupils and teachers in terms of behaviour and the Welsh language
- R2 Improve aspects of teaching in a minority of lessons to increase the level of challenge
- R3 Ensure more cohesive provision across the school to develop pupils' skills, particularly their literacy and numeracy skills
- R4 Strengthen the school's improvement planning procedure by prioritising better and ensuring that management systems support improvement work

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Main findings

Learning

Overall, many pupils at Ysgol Uwchradd Glan Clwyd make appropriate progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills. They can recall previous learning effectively and build on this appropriately by the end of the lesson. In a few exceptionally effective lessons, pupils make very strong progress. However, a few pupils do not make enough progress. This is mainly because of their attitudes to learning and because teachers' expectations are too low. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make very good progress as a result of strong and coordinated support.

Many pupils have sound communication skills. They have rich vocabulary and appropriate terminology to discuss different topics. A majority of pupils contribute sensibly and carefully to discussions. For example, in Welsh lessons, more able pupils can discuss the effect of the theme guilt on the characters in the novel 'O ran' by Mererid Hopwood. A majority of pupils listen attentively to each other and to staff. However, in a minority of lessons, pupils do not listen attentively enough to instructions and a minority interrupt their teachers and peers. In these lessons, many pupils discuss with each other in English rather than Welsh.

Many pupils have strong reading skills. When they are given an opportunity to do so, they read fluently with appropriate expression. They are able to gather information, find facts and come to valid conclusions when reading texts. For example, in history lessons, they give extensive answers when debating how unfair the treatment given to black people was under the apartheid regime in 1948. A few pupils have sophisticated reading skills. They recognise style features and discuss their effect on the reader skilfully.

Many pupils organise their written work carefully, use paragraphs appropriately and convey their ideas clearly. When they are given an opportunity to do so, a majority write strong extended pieces for different purposes and audiences. For example, pupils compare the work of the famous artists, Van Gogh and Gehry, very effectively. However, a minority of pupils make frequent and careless errors in both languages and have difficulty writing at length.

An excellent feature of the school's work is the swift and successful progress made by pupils who transfer from English-medium education at a late stage in their Welsh language skills. They develop as confident speakers and produce extended written work, which enables them to join the mainstream early in their school life.

A majority of pupils have a good understanding of number and shape and can calculate the area of composite shapes, including parts of a circle. They are also confident when calculating with fractions, percentages and decimals. When they are given an opportunity to do so, pupils can analyse data effectively and come to logical conclusions when evaluating graphs. However, a few pupils make basic calculation errors. Pupils do not apply their numeracy skills in relevant subjects across the curriculum often enough.

A notable strength within the school is the progress most pupils make in their advanced digital skills across the curriculum. For example, pupils use electronic tablets very skilfully in their lessons to compose, create attractive animations when presenting information and code to create websites. In their photography lessons, pupils in key stage 4 create digital portfolios of important themes in their lives. In their mathematics lessons, pupils in key stage 3 also create formulae in a spreadsheet to calculate how much they have left after receiving and spending money.

Overall, many pupils develop their creative skills appropriately. In design and technology lessons, Year 7 pupils create and design 'Jitterbugs' and plan attractive embroidery on the theme of 'The Zoo'. Pupils also use their thinking skills effectively. For example, in their mathematics lessons, pupils consider which method for calculating percentages is the best to use in different situations. Overall, sixth-form pupils make sound progress in their subject understanding. In some cases, they develop sophisticated skills, for example when understanding the steps that need to be taken when designing an electronic vehicle. Most discuss eloquently with each other in Welsh.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Most pupils are proud to belong to the Ysgol Uwchradd Glan Clwyd 'family'. Many have positive attitudes to school life and take pride in their Welshness. They are polite towards visitors and are willing to talk and to share their experiences of life at the school.

In many lessons, pupils have a positive attitude and show enthusiasm and a desire to learn. They arrive at their lessons punctually, settle quickly and get on with their initial tasks. In these lessons, pupils behave well, enjoy learning and show an interest in tasks. A majority of pupils work well together in pairs and groups, behave responsibly when listening to others and respect different points of view. However, in a minority of lessons, pupils do not concentrate well enough and talk to their friends instead of working on their tasks. A minority of teachers' expectations are not clear enough in terms of behaviour and use of the Welsh language. As a result, a few pupils show a lack of respect towards the teacher and their peers and many use English when discussing with each other.

Overall, pupils understand how to become healthy and confident individuals. They are aware of the importance of healthy eating, exercise and taking care of their mental health. Pupils benefit from taking advantage of the valuable extra-curricular opportunities that are available to them to compete in competitions and socialise with their friends, for example sports clubs, Urdd competitions and drama, art and history clubs.

Many pupils make a significant contribution to aspects of school life. They develop valuable leadership skills by contributing to the work of the school council, various forums and the '*Panel Parch a Charedigrwydd*' ('Respect and Kindness Panel'). They provide sensible comments and suggestions for the senior leadership team. For example, a revision room was set up for Year 11 pupils following a request from the school council. They develop as ethical and tolerant citizens and are very aware of the importance of mental health and the needs of others. As a result, they raise a significant amount of money for local charities.

Overall, sixth-form pupils are very mature. They are very willing to communicate with visitors to the school and to share their experiences. They benefit significantly from undertaking leadership roles across the school, for example by leading the school council and other committees. They develop their communication and social skills by mentoring younger pupils and training the young mentors.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not be reporting on pupil attendance rates during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years. 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

Most teachers have sound subject knowledge. They are supportive of pupils and many foster a supportive working relationship with them. Many ensure that pupils develop their understanding and use of subject terminology appropriately.

A majority of teachers use classroom management strategies consistently to create an environment that supports learning. These teachers plan tasks that build appropriately on previous work and prepare beneficial resources that engage many pupils' interests. They provide suitable challenge for pupils to ensure that they make progress. A majority of teachers explain subject concepts clearly and use a variety of suitable questions to monitor pupils' progress. In a minority of cases, teachers model practice effectively to help pupils to develop their skills.

In the few cases where teaching is at its best, teachers plan skilfully and tailor work to correspond to pupils' needs. They have very high expectations in terms of behaviour and achievement. These teachers are enthusiastic and ensure a tempo to the lessons that corresponds very effectively to pupils' progress. They ask incisive and probing questions and adapt questions skilfully for pupils of different abilities. They also challenge pupils to search for information and find it independently and provide strong support to ensure that pupils make strong progress.

In a minority of cases, teachers do not plan their lessons to ensure that pupils make enough progress. Although tasks keep pupils busy, they do not provide sufficient challenge. In these cases, teachers have a tendency to ask only closed questions. They do not use questioning techniques to probe pupils' understanding and extend their responses. These teachers do not adapt the pace of the lesson effectively enough to align with learning and, as a result, pupils lose focus. In addition, these pupils do not have high enough expectations in terms of behaviour or the use of the Welsh language.

Many teachers check pupils' understanding and provide them with constructive oral feedback. Overall, teachers provide useful written feedback on pupils work and provide them with opportunities to improve aspects of their work during '*Amser Llnau*' ('DIRT Time'). However, the quality of this feedback varies, and teachers' comments do not always highlight clearly enough how pupils can improve their work.

The school provides a broad curriculum that meets the needs of nearly all pupils, in addition to courses that reflect the requirements of local industries. There is a wide range of subjects in key stage 4, including vocational courses such as agriculture,

engineering, motor mechanics, salon services and unusual options such as astronomy. The school also provides a wide range of subjects in the sixth form by working with local schools, colleges and 'e-sgol'. Pupils are also given specific valuable opportunities to join apprenticeship schemes with local companies. Staff provide useful advice for pupils as they choose their courses before moving on to the next stage of their lives.

Staff develop the curriculum appropriately and trial a variety of new approaches to organise and coordinate pupils' learning. As part of this work, staff have begun to work with their partner primary schools to facilitate the academic transition from primary to secondary. Following the lockdown periods, staff have analysed pupils' skills in detail to identify gaps in their learning. As a result of this work, the school provides valuable sessions to restore and develop individuals' basic skills in intervention programmes and 'skills improvement' sessions for all pupils during the registration periods.

Skills co-ordinators provide beneficial support and guidance for departments to develop pupils' oral, reading and number skills. Throughout the lockdown periods, there was a purposeful focus on developing the digital skills of teachers and pupils. Since returning to school after these periods, staff have continued to develop this aspect of provision. This work has had a notable effect on what pupils can achieve. Recently, the skills co-ordinators have worked with Year 6 teachers in their partner primary schools to ensure consistency in teaching styles for aspects of numeracy. Although there are appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the subjects, the school has not mapped these opportunities to ensure consistent progress in skills.

A notable feature of the school's work is the way in which staff develop the Welsh language skills of pupils who transfer from English-medium education as latecomers. Very quickly, these pupils develop as fluent Welsh speakers who are able to study the whole curriculum through the medium of Welsh.

The personal and social education (PSE) programme is comprehensive and supports the development of pupils' social and emotional skills. It has a sensitive focus on important issues, such as sexual harassment and racism within society. The school has recently expanded on opportunities to discuss equality at the request of pupils in the 'Panel Parch a Charedigrwydd' (Respect and Kindness) group.

There is a host of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to develop their interests. These include taking part in competitions in the Urdd Eisteddfod and physical activities, including fencing, golf, gymnastics and dancing.

Care, support and guidance

Ysgol Uwchradd Glan Clwyd is a caring community and support for pupils' wellbeing is a strength. Since the pandemic, the school has implemented a variety of valuable strategies to support pupils to refamiliarise themselves with the school. Meeting pupils' emotional, health and social needs is a clear priority for all of the school's staff and they do this successfully.

Provision to support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is very comprehensive. The school's map of provision is a valuable means of ensuring that pupils receive appropriate interventions. Pupils are tracked carefully in terms of their scores in their basic skills, their personal assessments and against their academic targets. As a result of support, pupils who are in the department's care make sound progress against their targets. Internal structures, such as the '*Tîm Ysgol*' ('School Team') forum, are used effectively to identify pupils' needs and decide on the support steps they need. Staff from the '*Tîm Cynnal*' ('Support Team') and 'Yr Elwy' centre provide very good support for the school's vulnerable pupils. There are tight processes in place for achieving the requirements in terms of individual plans, and annual statutory reviews include the pupil, parents and other relevant people. The department ensures that there are robust transition processes in place for transferring to the school in Year 7 and when pupils under the centre's care leave at the end of their journey at the school.

The school provides broad and beneficial provision to support pupils' emotional, health and social needs, which includes interventions for emotional literacy and wellbeing. Productive use is also made of external partners, for example Barnardo's and the police. The school has robust procedures to identify vulnerable pupils and the wellbeing of these pupils is supported and monitored effectively.

The school has addressed raising attendance as a result of the pandemic in a purposeful and effective manner, which has led to strong progress in attendance rates. It makes successful use of internal procedures and external agencies to support pupils, including using restorative sessions and the '*Tîm Cynnal*' to support pupils to reintegrate into the school. It uses beneficial strategies, such as rewards and contacting the home, successfully to improve attendance. The school also contacts the home in a timely manner when a pupil is absent.

There are appropriate structures in place to support good behaviour across the school. Staff have received suitable training on supporting behaviour. However, all members of staff do not always implement these structures consistently and robustly enough.

A range of appropriate activities in the personal and social education (PSE) programme support pupils' needs in this area. There is robust careers provision, including '*Blaguro*' lessons in Year 9, the use of Careers Wales, options evenings for GCSE courses, the sixth form and local colleges.

The class tutor period is used purposefully to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are appropriate opportunities in these sessions to discuss and reflect on current affairs, such as the war in Ukraine and the work of the Urdd. Pupils are given valuable opportunities to develop to become principled individuals and to learn about Welsh history and culture. For example, they listen to the track of the week during the tutor period, celebrate '*Dydd Miwsig Cymru*' ('Welsh Language Music Day') and learn about Betty Campbell in Welsh lessons.

The pupil's voice has a beneficial influence on the school's work. The school council is a forum that focuses on different aspects of school life and includes a range of pupils from different backgrounds. They have succeeded, for example, in reducing the school's use of plastics and ensuring new bins for the outdoor area. Year 12

pupils lead the 'Panel Parch a Charedigrwydd' ('Respect and Kindness Panel'). It is an inclusive panel that is successful in raising awareness of equal rights and in encouraging a culture of not stereotyping at school. Pupils raise money for charities enthusiastically, for example DEC Cymru. Listening and discussing with learners is also used appropriately for academic activities, such as the scrutiny circle or to discuss the best ways to assess within subjects. For example, in the history department, pupils discussed the advantages and disadvantages of written and oral feedback.

Since the pandemic restrictions have been lifted, the school provides very diverse opportunities for pupils to take part in performances and events as individuals and in groups. There is a flurry of activity at the school in preparation for the Urdd Eisteddfod and there is a comprehensive timetable of extra-curricular physical education activities. This is valuable in nurturing pupils' self-confidence, their ability to express themselves creatively and their ability to work as part of a team.

Careful arrangements for ensuring that pupils are safe has led to a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. Staff and governors receive regular beneficial training in this area and, as a result, they have a good understanding of their roles. There are robust arrangements for referring safeguarding or child protection issues and detailed records are kept on a suitable electronic system. Leaders make beneficial use of a variety of relevant information to identify vulnerable pupils and ensure that they monitor the wellbeing of these pupils carefully.

The school works effectively with the local authority and relevant agencies to refer pupils to specialist support and respond to specific themes proactively. The school deals with any cases of bullying in a timely and effective manner and clear records are kept of these incidents. A strong feature of the school's work in this area is the work of the young mentors, where pupils are part of the process of resolving disputes between their peers.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior leadership team work well together and demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting the wellbeing of pupils and staff. Throughout the pandemic, a clear priority was placed on caring for pupils, their families and the staff.

The headteacher is ambitious for the school, is keen for the school not to stand still and to improve continuously. Alongside the senior leadership team, he has succeeded in creating a caring community with a strong safeguarding culture.

The headteacher has a strong vision to 'nurture progressive Welsh citizens.' Despite the commitment of the senior leadership team and many of the staff to this vision, the whole school community does not sustain and support it firmly enough.

Senior leaders and governors have identified that leaders' roles and responsibilities are not completely clear and balanced under the current system. There is a plan in place to restructure the leadership team to extend capacity and develop a succession plan.

There are suitable arrangements for link meetings. There are regular meetings between middle leaders and their line managers where relevant issues are discussed, such as the department's priorities and leaders' evaluation and improvement work. There is an appropriate system for performance management. However, line management and performance responsibilities do not always align with senior leaders' areas of responsibility.

Overall, the school has appropriate performance management systems, but these systems do not always intertwine to support the school's improvement work effectively enough. For example, there is not a coherent enough link between the school's priorities, the performance management system and professional development.

Leaders have resumed appropriate quality assurance and improvement planning activities sensitively. The school has a clear cycle for self-evaluation processes. This includes a system for gathering first-hand evidence of teaching and learning from a range of useful sources. For example, leaders at all levels seek pupils' views regularly and act on their ideas.

There are clear examples of leaders at all levels identifying aspects for improvement and then putting steps in place to develop those aspects. For example, the school has developed the progress team to better support pupils' wellbeing, and specific departments have adapted their provision in response to pupils' academic needs following the pandemic. The development in terms of improving the digital skills of staff and pupils over a short period is notable. However, senior leaders have not identified a few important weaknesses incisively enough. There are too many whole-school improvement priorities and, as a result, actions are not effective enough to make consistent progress across the priorities.

Middle leaders gather and analyse useful evidence from their departments and summarise the main strengths and areas for improvement. They support improvements by sharing effective practices within and across departments. Departmental evaluations do not always focus enough on pupils' progress in their skills and subject knowledge in addition to their attitudes to learning.

Staff receive purposeful professional development opportunities that respond to their needs and align with the school's priorities. There are effective opportunities for them to develop and use their digital skills. Specific training on aspects of teaching, such as recalling information, has helped teachers to refine their practice.

Parents are positive about communication between the school and home and the support that they receive. There is a purposeful website for parents to help them to support their children.

Governors are very supportive of the school. They have a suitable understanding of many of the school's strengths and, to a lesser extent, the areas for improvement. They are developing as critical friends and are beginning to understand their role in terms of promoting eating and drinking healthily.

The school's budget is managed effectively. The business manager, headteacher and governors plan and monitor expenditure carefully. The school currently has a

significant surplus, but there are sensible plans in place to spend funding. The school makes appropriate use of grants, including the deprivation grant.

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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