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

A report on

Ysgol Gynradd Rhostryfan

Rhostryfan
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
LL54 7LR

Date of inspection: September 2022

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Gynradd Rhostryfan

Name of provider	Ysgol Gynradd Rhostryfan
Local authority	Cyngor Gwynedd
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	84
Pupils of statutory school age	63
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	9
Percentage of statutory school age 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 the primary sector is 21.3%)*	4.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (*The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 22.2%*)	22.2%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	90.5%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/03/2014

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 Rhostryfan is a kind and homely community. Pupils are extremely polite and there is obvious respect between them and all members of staff. Nearly all pupils take care of their peers and, as a result, this contributes exceptionally well to the inclusive nature and good-natured ethos that exists.

Staff provide a range of learning experiences that engage pupils' interest and motivate them to succeed. The school makes good use of current affairs, visits and links with the community to link pupils' learning with the context of the school and the wider world. The school's provision to develop pupils' core skills, particularly their use of the Welsh language, is a notable strength. Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make sound progress in all areas of learning by the end of their time at the school. They make exceptionally good progress in their personal and social development and their speaking and listening skills.

Across the school, staff provide many interesting opportunities for pupils to learn through first-hand experiences. They provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills across the areas of learning. There is a strong working relationship between teachers and assistants and they facilitate learning successfully. However, opportunities for pupils to learn through free and investigative learning experiences, both indoors and outdoors, are limited.

The headteacher provides effective leadership, is a very good role model and provides a strategic direction for the school. She has a clear vision for the school, which is based on core values. Leaders identify improvement priorities sensibly and monitor and evaluate progress regularly. They know the school well and contribute knowledgeably to beneficial self-evaluation activities. However, members of the governing body do not have a deep enough understanding of the requirements of their duties and responsibilities.

Recommendations

R1 Develop and use the outdoor areas regularly to enrich pupils' learning

R2 Develop the strategic role of governors further so that they are able to challenge the school and hold it to account

What happens next

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

Main findings

Learning

On entry to the school, most pupils' basic skills correspond to what is expected for their age. Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make sound progress in all areas of learning by the end of their time at the school.

Nearly all pupils across the school develop excellent listening skills. The youngest pupils follow simple instructions and respond to questions purposefully. They succeed in re-telling familiar events confidently, for example when using a story map to recall the story of Little Red Riding Hood. By Year 2, they use natural Welsh syntax when discussing the flooding of Tryweryn. Nearly all pupils at the top of the school respond maturely to the views of others and listen respectfully to each other's oral presentations. For example, they listen well to peers as they express an opinion about working in the quarries in Llanberis many years ago. They are able to use suitable vocabulary when discussing the working conditions of the villagers.

Most pupils' reading skills are developing very well. The youngest pupils recognise letters and use an appropriate range of phonic strategies to read familiar and unfamiliar words. By the end of Year 2, most read meaningfully and confidently, for example when reading information about how to stay safe over Halloween. Most older pupils read intelligently in various contexts in both languages. They vary their tone of voice and use punctuation correctly to show their understanding. They also develop their higher-order reading skills very effectively to gather information from different sources. For example, when searching for information about Hedd Wyn and reading a poem, pupils make ambitious choices about how to present their information.

Most pupils' early writing skills develop very well by drawing pictures and emulating writing letters. By Year 2, they write in an appropriate range of contexts for different audiences, for example when writing a portrayal of Branwen. They show a good awareness of the importance of punctuation and accuracy when spelling. By Year 4, most pupils play with words skilfully when describing the effect of plastic waste on harming the environment. At the top of the school, most pupils draft their work effectively and make excellent use of similes and idioms to enrich their work. They write purposefully and show a sound awareness of the features of a range of different genres in Welsh and English, for example when writing an article to persuade people to read the Mabinogi.

Most pupils have sound mathematics and numeracy skills. At the bottom of the school, they recognise numbers to 10 and count to twenty. Pupils in the foundation class succeed in calculating change from 10p successfully when selling goods in the shop. By the end of Year 2, they have a good grasp of number facts and data, for example when calculating and creating a tally chart and graph when analysing rubbish waste. As pupils move through the school, most build well on previous learning by using a variety of problem-solving methods to apply their number skills in appropriate contexts. A good example of this is pupils identifying with the cost of living crisis and problem-solving to compare the cost of goods in supermarkets.

Nearly all pupils across the school apply their digital skills skilfully. The youngest pupils control a programmable appliance confidently and use apps to record the parts of the body independently and successfully. By Year 2, they create and interpret a block graph independently to reflect different types of homes. At the top of the school, pupils develop their ability to combine multimedia methods in increasingly complex ways. They create a combination of text, images, graphics, sound and video to provide effective presentations, for example when creating a website about Ukraine.

Most pupils' creative skills are developing well across the school. Pupils experiment with a variety of media to emulate the techniques of artists when developing their art skills. Overall, pupils enjoy art activities and make imaginative choices when selecting different resources to convey interesting pictures. A good example of this is older pupils using the style of a local artist successfully to draw the landscape of the quarries in the Nantlle Valley.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Ysgol Rhostryfan is an extremely kind and homely environment. Pupils take care of their peers and, as a result, this contributes exceptionally well to the inclusive nature and good-natured ethos that exists. There is a warm and supportive relationship between staff and pupils. Nearly all pupils show pride in their school and feel safe within its community. Pupils behave exceptionally well and are polite and respectful towards adults and visitors. They treat each other with care and consideration and work together effectively, respecting the contributions of others; for example, pupils in the foundation class discuss the differences between people.

Through a shared understanding of morals and values, pupils feel safe and know whom to approach if anything is worrying them. Pupils appreciate that adults treat them fairly and with respect. This contributes successfully to developing a close working relationship that is based on trust and respect.

Most pupils take their leadership responsibilities seriously and pupils are enthusiastic members of the school's councils. They are given numerous opportunities to contribute positively to activities and events and strengthen the relationship between the school and the community. Most pupils treat others with empathy and are keen to help those who are in need, for example by holding a school uniform exchange afternoon recently to support families in the area. The Eco Council has also promoted sustainable modes of transport by organising a travel to school week. On the whole, council members fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously and effectively.

Nearly all pupils concentrate very well for extended periods. They demonstrate perseverance and resilience when completing tasks and undertake class tasks enthusiastically. Nearly all pupils use a range of literacy and numeracy skills successfully when answering various questions and when solving challenging problems. They develop their skills to work independently and work in a group effectively. For example, when discussing footballers' salaries, older pupils respect the contributions of others and respond very intelligently. This has a very positive effect on pupils' attitudes to learning, which helps them to learn throughout their lives.

Nearly all pupils understand the need for a balanced diet and the benefits of keeping fit. Many older pupils understand the nutritional value of various foods. As a result, they make informed decisions about what they eat. Many pupils participate purposefully in after-school clubs, for example the weekly football club and Urdd sports clubs.

Supporting pupils' well-being is a priority at the school. Most pupils understand how to respond appropriately to situations that affect their emotions. The use of well-being corners and a weekly visit from Millie the dog to support vulnerable pupils with their learning are very good examples of this. Through their awareness of fairness, equality and sustainability, pupils develop to become moral, knowledgeable citizens. For example, pupils in the middle of the school consider the message in the Bible about taking care of the environment and link this with what they can do in their local area.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school is making good progress towards implementing a curriculum that reflects the principles and culture of the Curriculum for Wales. Leaders and staff work with pupils, parents and governors to create and share a vision for their curriculum. Following joint planning periods with nearby schools and by trialling new ideas, staff produce effective plans to provide interesting learning experiences that consider the context of the local community. For example, when linking the work of local residents in Llanberis quarry, the school intertwines the work of a local artist and a local author to develop older pupils' literacy and expressive arts skills.

An excellent feature of the school's work is the provision to develop pupils' spoken Welsh and English skills. Staff are excellent language models and this helps pupils to become confident and respectful speakers, who are keen to develop and use new vocabulary in both languages. Nearly all lessons are very well-paced to engage pupils' interest and motivate them to work hard and achieve to the best of their ability. The school's particular strength is the professional relationship between staff and pupils. Staff know their pupils very well and, as a result, they tailor activities to meet most pupils' needs, including those who may experiences obstacles in their learning.

Most teachers ask probing questions to build on previous knowledge and develop pupils' thinking skills. Teachers also ensure interesting presentations and conclusions that engage and maintain pupils' interest successfully. This has a positive effect on the learning environment, which is very welcoming and productive.

The classrooms are exciting and lively places in which pupils very much enjoy their learning. The learning areas engage pupils' interest and capture their imagination skilfully. Across the school, nearly all activities support pupils to learn with increasing independence and to gain confidence and perseverance when experimenting with different resources. For example, staff provide visual and stimulating resources that promote pupils' literacy and numeracy skills effectively in all areas.

On the whole, teachers plan imaginative opportunities to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum. Pupils benefit from effective teaching across the school and knowledgeable staff deliver exciting lessons. In nearly all cases, teachers set clear objectives for lessons and activities and establish

high expectations for pupils' learning. However, planned learning experiences do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their skills outside the classroom.

The school makes good use of assessment procedures to track pupils' progress as they move through the school. Across the school, there are regular feedback and planning periods between staff and pupils to review the progress and well-being of individuals. These are very beneficial for adapting provision to support progress and earmark further improvement. In the youngest classes, teachers monitor pupils' learning effectively and provide oral support and feedback to improve their work and extend learning. Pupils are beginning to develop the ability to select tasks that are appropriate for their level of ability and make choices about the next steps in their learning. Pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 are given valuable opportunities to make suggestions on how to improve their own work and support their peers before seeking feedback from their teachers. Older pupils select the level of challenge when undertaking their activities and are encouraged to try the next level if they complete their tasks well.

The culture of co-operation and pupil-to-pupil discussions often leads to a vibrant and lively working environment in the classrooms.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a very happy and caring community. The school's ethos and moments of reflection each morning promote pupils' spiritual and moral development successfully. Staff lead purposeful discussions about a variety of issues, such as respecting others, acknowledging differences and sustainability. This ensures that most pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and know what is just and fair. Staff encourage pupils to consider the views of others sensitively, to acknowledge and respect diversity and the importance of values such as tolerance. These values are reinforced skilfully

The school has robust procedures for monitoring and tracking attendance, which has a positive effect on the attendance percentage of pupils across the school. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils also meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Staff know the pupils very well and respond positively to their emotional needs. They prioritise the emotional care of pupils very successfully through practical activities in the well-being areas. This makes a very positive contribution to the caring and helpful learning environment that is characteristic of the school. Staff provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to take part in physical well-being sessions. These motivate pupils to keep fit and to appreciate the importance of doing so. For example, the youngest pupils understand the effect of exercise on their heart rate. The school encourages pupils to take part in sport and leisure activities. For example, they take advantage of dance sessions by an external company and compete regularly in Urdd sports competitions. Through a partnership with a specialist coach, the school also provides beneficial opportunities to teach pupils how to cycle safely.

Arrangements for tracking and monitoring the progress of individual pupils and groups are appropriate. Staff identify pupils' needs at an early stage and provide

them with effective support through support programmes. These programmes have a positive effect on pupils' well-being and their literacy and numeracy skills.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is robust. The ALNCo and all staff ensure that identification, tracking and support are appropriate. Individual development plans and one-page profiles include suitable targets that are implemented appropriately by teachers and assistants to ensure that pupils make sound progress. A variety of partnerships with agencies provide effective support for learners with additional learning needs. Reviews of pupils' progress lead to teachers having a sound understanding of pupils' needs.

The school's supportive approach ensures strong relationships between pupils, their families and the school. Staff organise a number of events in partnership with the community, which reinforce the sense of belonging and help pupils to treat others with respect and care, for example by organising and holding *Ras Rhostryfan* (Rhostryfan Run) and supporting the village council to run the funday carnival each year. This is one of the school's obvious strengths, which contributes to the sense of community.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear strategic vision that is shared effectively and realised successfully throughout the school. She is supported by a dedicated team of teaching and support staff. Everyone's contributions are appreciated fully. They provide rich experiences to meet the well-being and learning needs of all pupils in a stimulating Welsh environment that promotes pride in their local area and their country. This is at the heart of the school's vision.

The whole school community takes pride in its motto, *"Ein hysgol yn galon i'n cymuned"* ("Our school as the heart of the community"). This contributes effectively towards encouraging the school's pupils, staff and partners to take ownership of the vision and realise it with pride. There are robust procedures in place to keep everyone safe, of which all the school's stakeholders are aware. Staff have a very good relationship with parents. They are encouraged to make practical contributions to the school's work. Parents appreciate the strong communication between themselves and the school. A caring mindset and familial ethos are given a prominent place in the school.

The headteacher ensures that robust self-evaluation arrangements have been established to evaluate provision and learning. Staff use various sources of evidence effectively to gather and collate relevant information about the school's performance. The headteacher has a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. There is a robust link between self-evaluation activities and improvement planning. The school improvement plan is a detailed and comprehensive document of which all the school's staff are aware.

The headteacher manages funds carefully and organises the school's resources effectively. She makes good use of different grants that are allocated to the school, for example by using the pupil development grant to provide intervention programmes for pupils who need further support with their learning. Grant expenditure also allows beneficial professional learning opportunities in response to

national priorities. For example, to support staff to prepare for the Curriculum for Wales and the additional learning needs transformation programme. The school is building on a good foundation in introducing the revised curriculum and takes advantage of co-operation with nearby schools on local projects. Joint discussions between all of the school's staff and school partnerships in the local area are a strong element of planning.

The school provides well to promote pupils' health and well-being through healthy eating and drinking schemes. A good example of this is acting on the school council's recommendation to provide free milk for all pupils. The school promotes a culture of safeguarding effectively and staff receive a suitable range of training to support this, for example online safety. All staff promote sustainable practices throughout the school. A positive element of this is providing opportunities for pupils to re-use toys, books or clothes by exchanging them.

Members of the governing body are very supportive and encouraging of all the school's activities. They receive reports from the headteacher each term highlighting the school's life and work. Governors contribute appropriately to monitoring activity and this helps them to ensure that they have up-to-date knowledge of pupils' standards of learning. Governors work effectively with leaders and pupils in ensuring that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. However, there is no structure to the meetings of the relevant sub-committees. As a result, members do not have a deep enough understanding of the requirements of their duties and responsibilities.

Whole school staff meetings are held each week to organise and act on core issues at the school. The school facilitates and provides relevant training regularly for all members of staff. Performance management arrangements for teachers and assistants are based on their individual professional needs and the school's priorities. For example, staff work together on well-being projects.

There is a productive relationship between the school and the community. Leaders use digital communication methods to inform parents about events regularly. They also hold open evenings to share pedagogical principles. The school benefits from the valuable contributions of the Parents' Association and the local community, who have invested a significant amount of money to purchase digital equipment to support provision for digital competence. A vibrant and lively ethos of co-operation contributes significantly to the school's warm and welcoming ethos.

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.

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