



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

A report on
Ysgol Penrhyncoch

Penrhyncoch
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY23 3EH

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 Penrhyncoch

Name of provider	Ysgol Penrhyncoch
Local authority	Ceredigion County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	100
Pupils of statutory school age	78
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	6
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 primary sector is 23.0%)</i>	8.6 %
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 primary sector is 16.1%)</i>	19.2%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	42.3%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	April 2016
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/05/2017

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 Penrhyncoch is a welcoming village school that has close links with the local community. The headteacher and all staff contribute consistently to creating a caring and inclusive ethos. Nearly all pupils show positive attitudes to learning and, during their time at the school, many make sound progress. Pupils are beginning to make decisions about what they learn. However, on the whole, pupils, including those who are members of committees such as the school council, do not influence the school's work regularly.

Most pupils speak Welsh with increasing confidence in lessons, although a minority of the oldest pupils turn to English occasionally when discussing with their peers. Many develop their reading skills soundly. They develop and apply their writing skills in activities across the curriculum successfully. However, at times, the oldest pupils rely too much on writing guides, which hinder their ability to write freely and with increasing independence. They also do not improve the content of their work regularly enough after receiving feedback.

Many pupils develop their numeracy skills suitably. On the whole, they develop digital skills appropriately, although the oldest pupils do not apply the full range of digital skills to the best of their ability. On the whole, teachers provide interesting lessons that engage pupils' interest successfully. However, provision does not always challenge a few pupils to achieve to the best of their ability, particularly those at the top of the school.

Teachers provide a wide variety of valuable opportunities for pupils to compete in the local community, for example by taking part in sports tournaments, local shows and eisteddfodau.

Ysgol Penllwyn is federated with Ysgol Penrhyncoch. The headteacher, who works across both sites, embodies the motto '*gyda'n gilydd, gallwn lwyddo*' ('together we can succeed'). Although the schools have their own unique communities, they also take pride in the fact that they are part of one federation and hold activities together for pupils and parents regularly.

Recommendations

- R1 Address the health and safety issue that was raised during the inspection
- R2 Ensure that teachers' expectations are high enough to support all pupils to achieve to the best of their ability
- R3 Develop pupils' independent learning skills, including their ability to make choices about their learning, improve their own work and influence the work of the school

What happens next

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

Main findings

Learning

During their time at the school, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make sound progress in their learning and achieve well.

Most pupils listen well to adults and each other. The youngest pupils' oral skills are developing successfully. They speak confidently in Welsh about their work and experiences. For example, pupils in the reception class discuss their cake ingredients enthusiastically and Year 1 and 2 pupils communicate with each other effectively when making dough. Most of the oldest pupils develop their oral skills skilfully in Welsh and English. They communicate effectively in both languages and contribute purposefully to class discussions, by expressing their views clearly most of the time. Many pupils' speaking skills are developed purposefully in interesting activities, for example when presenting moral messages as part of a thanksgiving service. Most pupils take pride in the Welsh language; however, a minority turn to English when talking spontaneously with each other in formal and informal situations.

Many pupils develop their reading skills successfully as they move through the school. They show enthusiasm towards reading and value the interesting range of reading texts that are available to them. Most of the youngest pupils build on their knowledge and understanding of letter sounds correctly, and older pupils read intelligently in various contexts in both languages. They vary their tone of voice and show punctuation marks correctly to show their understanding. They also develop their higher-order reading skills purposefully to gather information from different sources, for example when finding facts about Poland.

Across the school, pupils' writing skills are developing soundly. From a young age, most pupils show enthusiasm towards writing while experimenting with mark-making. They begin to form letters correctly and develop their skills to write simple sentences. Most of the youngest pupils develop their skills to write extended sentences by the end of Year 2. The oldest pupils have a sound understanding of different genres of writing and adapt their writing sensibly by considering the audience. The most able pupils use purposeful vocabulary, catchy sentences and effective adjectives effectively to enrich their writing. At times, pupils are too dependent on writing guides and worksheets. This limits the purposeful opportunities for them to write increasingly freely and independently. As a result, a few of the oldest pupils do not always develop their extended writing skills to the best of their ability.

Many pupils across the school have sound mathematical skills, a good grasp of number facts and measurement and handle data correctly. In the reception class, most pupils succeed in forming numbers correctly and recognise number bonds to 4. By Year 1 and 2, pupils use mathematical equipment with increasing confidence, for example when weighing ingredients while cooking and using standard units, such as grams and kilograms, to calculate totals. At the top of the school, many pupils develop their numeracy skills beneficially, for example by creating a line graph following an investigation into heart rate. When provision allows them to apply their numeracy skills across the areas of learning, many also make consistent progress.

Many of the youngest pupils create presentations skilfully, for example by adding an animation and voiceover to their class story. As pupils move through the school, they develop their presentation skills maturely. For example, they create digital advertisements to be shared safely on social media, before taking orders for products as part of their preparations to hold a virtual winter fair. Most pupils use computer equipment successfully when recording and evaluating their work. They have a sound understanding of online safety. However, the oldest pupils do not develop the full range of digital skills.

The youngest pupils' creative skills are developing appropriately. Most are keen to discuss the properties of the shapes they have made from clay and keen to add suitable detail to their products. At the top of the school, most pupils develop their creative skills valuably, for example by composing a score and performing the music by using a simple pentatonic scale.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Some of the school's strongest features are its inclusive nature, caring ethos and homely environment. Most pupils enjoy being members of the school community, take pride in their school and feel that they are valued by adults. Across the school, pupils have a positive relationship with adults. Pupils treat each other with respect and extend a warm welcome to visitors. On the whole, many pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and show an interest in their work. They work together successfully in pairs and groups and offer support to each other, when necessary. However, a few of the oldest pupils do not arrive at school punctually which, in turn, disrupts their learning.

Most pupils value and respect the contributions of others and respond positively to feedback from their peers and adults, overall. Many concentrate on tasks for extended periods. However, at times, a few pupils are too willing to ask for support from adults rather than persevering when facing difficulties. As a result, they do not develop their independent learning skills robustly enough.

Many pupils show a willingness to undertake leadership roles, such as the digital wizards, and to be members of the '*Cymry i'r carn*' group and the school ambassadors. As a result of these responsibilities, they take their duties seriously. They are beginning to influence the school's work, for example by making a successful application to the local authority for money to invest in board games to promote the use of the Welsh language. However, on the whole, they are not given enough opportunities to influence the school's arrangements.

Pupils feel safe at the school. They have a sound understanding of how to stay safe online and know who to approach for advice if anything is worrying them. Nearly all pupils have a sound understanding of how to stay healthy by eating and drinking sensibly. They also value the regular keep fit sessions. For example, the youngest pupils take part in useful multisensory circuit sessions and the older pupils enjoy beneficial fitness sessions.

Teaching and learning experiences

The leaders and staff of the schools in the federation work together strategically to design and deliver a curriculum that fosters and implements the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. A strong element of provision is the emphasis on celebrating important Welsh events, for example by celebrating Owain Glyndŵr day and taking part in local and national eisteddfodau.

Teachers and staff across the federation provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop Welsh speaking and listening skills. For example, as part of the 'Ein Cynefin' project, pupils create podcasts which include the history of a local poet. However, a minority of pupils turn to English, for example when talking to their peers in formal and informal situations, particularly at the top of the school. Teachers raise pupils' awareness of international languages successfully. For example, recently, the oldest pupils have deepened their understanding of international language by beginning to learn French and Polish. As a result, pupils show curiosity towards developing linguistic skills and develop tolerance towards other cultures.

Staff have positive working relationships with pupils, which motivate them to learn in an inclusive learning environment. Overall, teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and treat all pupils equally and with respect. Across the school, assistants support teachers effectively to develop pupils' skills. Where teaching is at its best, teachers plan purposefully to ensure that lessons are interesting and stimulating. In these cases, teachers share objectives clearly and use a range of purposeful methods and resources to develop many pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. They ensure that pupils are immersed in their learning and concentrate on tasks, and work with their peers regularly to achieve to the best of their ability. However, a few teachers do not provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills regularly enough. For example, these pupils are too dependent on writing guides, which limits their ability to write increasingly freely and at length.

Teachers assess pupils' progress continuously in lessons and provide oral feedback to support them to improve the standard of their work. Leaders and teachers hold joint discussions regularly to discuss progress in pupils' skills. In the best practice, staff use this information purposefully and adapt provision to support pupils to make constructive progress in their skills. However, feedback does not always provide pupils with enough guidance to know what to do to improve their work and how, particularly their extended written work.

Staff provide numerous opportunities for pupils to compete in a wide range of sports competitions, in addition to beneficial opportunities for them to take part in activities in the local community. For example, pupils take advantage of the opportunity to join the local Tractor Run and the oldest pupils are given opportunities to go camping. Staff provide a valuable range of extra-curricular clubs, for example a hockey club and cooking club. As a result, pupils develop positive attitudes towards staying healthy.

Care, support and guidance

Staff treat pupils with respect and the caring ethos permeates the school. Pupils' well-being has been a clear priority during the pandemic and continues to be a leading aspect of the federation's work.

The school provides effective learning support for pupils with ALN. Staff use a good variety of different techniques to support pupils. They are supported skilfully by a team of assistants who provide beneficial sessions for pupils to develop communication skills successfully. Staff care for pupils' emotional, health and social needs effectively by providing specific activities and support sessions, where appropriate. For example, they organise beneficial activities about periods for a group of pupils across the federation.

Teachers produce useful one-page profiles for ALN pupils effectively, which include pupils' interests and a description of what helps them to succeed. Staff track the progress of ALN pupils carefully by scrutinising progress in support programmes, scrutinising work and holding regular professional discussions. As a result, they have a sound understanding of the progress that learners with ALN achieve.

Staff adapt provision regularly to meet the needs of pupils across the school. For example, after analysing a pupil well-being questionnaire, projects were planned to encourage pupils to celebrate diversity and respect each other. However, on the whole, pupils have a limited influence on what they learn. Representative groups, such as the school council, are beginning to influence the school's arrangements, for example representatives of '*Cymry i'r carn*' choosing Welsh music to be played around the school.

The school has beneficial collective worship arrangements, which include opportunities for pupils to reflect quietly and praise through singing. It uses technology effectively to hold joint assemblies between pupils at both schools in the federation, which supports their moral development consistently. Staff promote values such as respect and empathy successfully, for example by presenting different pumpkins to stimulate a discussion about celebrating diversity. However, they do not promote pupils' understanding of children's rights regularly enough.

Leaders work closely with the local authority's family engagement officer to monitor pupils' punctuality and attendance. However, a very few of the oldest pupils continue to arrive at school late which, in turn, disrupts their learning. Staff have a sound awareness of the process of reporting safeguarding issues.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which is based on the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales. She is supported by a team of conscientious middle leaders and governors. Together, they set a decisive strategic direction for the schools in the federation. They succeed in creating and maintaining a strong ethos of co-operation. As a result, all staff in the federation consider themselves to be members of one team.

The governing body acts as a critical friend that supports and challenges staff effectively. Governors ensure that the school promotes healthy eating and drinking effectively, for example by ensuring that pupils only eat fruit during snack time. They make decisions about expenditure appropriately, for example by prioritising additional expenditure on refurbishing the pupils' toilets.

Leaders allocate the budget to support the school's priorities suitably, for example to improve pupils' Welsh language skills as they returned to school after the pandemic. Grants are used effectively, including the pupil development grant, to improve pupils' outcomes. For example, they provide support programmes to support specific pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and social skills effectively.

Leaders foster and develop a productive working relationship with various partners. They have robust transition processes with the Cylch Meithrin playgroup that is located on the school's site. Staff share useful information with parents. For example, they use a secure online digital system effectively to share photographs, videos and pieces of work. They provide information for parents about what they can do to support their children's learning, for example by providing ideas on how to enrich reading sessions at home. During open evenings that are provided for parents, staff share a list of useful suggestions to encourage them to talk to their children about different aspects of their work.

The school has a number of productive partnerships with the local community. For example, it works regularly with Aberystwyth Arts Centre to enrich pupils' creative experiences. Leaders maintain a close relationship with local businesses to provide beneficial opportunities for learners to develop life skills, for example by helping in a shop and greeting customers. By doing so, they develop social communication skills effectively.

Leaders ensure that the school's safeguarding culture is prominent throughout the school, for example by ensuring that all staff know how to respond to concerns about child protection. However, during the inspection, a health and safety issue relating to the site came to the attention of the inspection team. Estyn will write to the chair of governors to ask for this matter to be resolved.

The school's self-evaluation processes have been established robustly over time, but due to COVID-19, some activities had to be postponed for a time. Recently, following an unstable period in terms of staffing and the pandemic, leaders have completed a whole-federation self-evaluation activity titled '*myfyrio, ailgydio a thanio*', which includes scrutinising books. They identify many strengths and areas for development correctly. However, the full range of quality assurance activities has not yet resumed.

Leaders organise a wide range of professional learning activities for staff. For example, as a result of a range of information and communication technology (ICT) training, teachers arrange for pupils to be given opportunities to use technology more manageably. Recently, in introducing the Curriculum for Wales, leaders have refined the provision offered for pupils beneficially by introducing French sessions. Leaders support staff to develop their practice and challenge underperformance effectively, where appropriate.

As the school is federated with Ysgol Penllwyn, the headteacher spends a percentage of her time at each site and a few other members of staff also teach or provide support in both schools. All teachers also work together closely to plan learning experiences for pupils across the federation and contribute to professional discussions as one team regularly.

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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