



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

A report on

Ysgol y Lawnt

**Surgery Hill
Rhymney
NP22 5LS**

Date of inspection: October 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Y Lawnt

Name of provider	Ysgol y Lawnt
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	212
Pupils of statutory school age	147
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	35
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>	18.4%
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 primary sector is 16.1%)</i>	23.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	6.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0%
Date of headteacher appointment	April 2013
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	05/05/2014

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 y Lawnt is a successful learning community that celebrates the progress and achievement of all pupils particularly effectively. The headteacher, with the valuable support of the governing body, provides clear and wise leadership and respects the efforts of everyone who contributes to the well-rounded education for pupils.

The school's ethos is based firmly on a shared vision, which is to promote Welshness, courtesy and responsibility. As a result, most pupils show very strong attitudes to learning, take care of others and take pride in their Welshness and their school.

Teachers and learning assistants have high expectations for all learners in terms of their achievement and behaviour and support them to develop their skills successfully. They set clear learning objectives and develop activities with a suitable pace. They use a range of original experiences to engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm. In the best examples, they use various questioning techniques very effectively to extend pupils' understanding of different learning contexts.

They provide valuable well-being support for pupils, for example by taking part in weekly '*Gwener Gwenu*' ('Smile Friday') activities, which have a positive effect on pupils' ability to apply themselves fully to their learning.

The weekly '*Caffi Clic a Chlanc*' café provides very valuable opportunities for all pupils in turn to develop and apply their real-life skills by working with members of the community, including the school's parents. For example, pupils produce menus, cook food to be served and handle money when selling the produce and then analyse the profit.

Most pupils show progress from their starting points in their skills, including those with additional learning needs. However, pupils' Welsh reading skills are not developing well enough.

Recommendations

R1 Improve pupils' Welsh reading skills

R2 Share best practice in teaching across the school

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, the basic skills of a majority of pupils correspond to what is expected for their age, except in Welsh where most are newcomers to the language. During their time at the school, most pupils develop knowledge, understanding and skills that are appropriate for their age and starting points successfully. As a result, they show sound progress from one year to the next and during the school year.

In the nursery and reception classes, a majority of pupils use an increasing range of vocabulary purposefully in various situations. By Year 2, many listen attentively to instructions from adults and respect the views of other pupils. By Year 4, most use imaginative methods to learn new vocabulary surrounding a theme, for example by composing and singing a '*Calon Lân*' rap.

At the top of the school, most pupils communicate fluently in Welsh and English and speak confidently in a range of contexts. Most listen well and respect the views of others when discussing various topics in both languages. However, limited vocabulary prevents a few pupils from communicating in Welsh with increasing confidence across the school.

A majority of pupils' reading skills are developing well. The youngest pupils are beginning to use an appropriate range of phonic strategies to read familiar and unfamiliar words. By Year 2, around half of pupils use their reading skills with increasing confidence, for example when following instructions on how to make gingerbread boy biscuits. Many of the older pupils read with increasing accuracy in Welsh. However, a minority of pupils do not use tone or expression when reading aloud. Most read intelligently in a variety of contexts in English. They also develop their higher-order reading skills purposefully to gather information from different sources, for example when researching the features of an effective portrayal.

Many pupils' early writing skills are developing well. Pupils in the nursery class practise patterns and shapes successfully by using different equipment, including natural resources outdoors. By Year 2, they begin to write in an appropriate range of contexts for different audiences, which includes recording instructions for a recipe to make biscuits. Many older pupils build on their writing skills soundly. By Year 4, many have an increasing understanding of grammar, which includes the correct use of verbs and mutations. A majority of pupils develop their extended writing skills gradually, which includes writing an original ending to a myth. Many older pupils build on these experiences by writing an information pamphlet about gadgets of their choice.

From the beginning of their time at the school up to Year 2, many pupils have a sound understanding of mathematical concepts. They use mental calculation methods to solve money problems and apply their skills successfully to solve problems in a variety of contexts. For example, Year 2 pupils estimate and measure the crossing distance of an imaginary river outdoors. In the school's oldest years, most pupils make sound progress in their number skills and build on their previous learning skilfully. Most pupils use their mathematical methods effectively, for example

when investigating the shape area of real-life equipment while planning the school's café area.

Many pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developing appropriately. In the nursery and reception classes, for example, they develop their skills with a tablet computer appropriately and use various apps that promote their oral skills. By the end of Year 2, they improve their skills purposefully, for example by using software to control a programmable toy to move around a map. As they move through the school, many pupils' skills improve consistently by using an increasing range of software and digital equipment. For example, the oldest pupils create a computer game based on the class theme successfully.

Most pupils' creative skills are developing very effectively. For example, pupils in the reception class act out the main events of a story in the outdoor area. Nearly all pupils enjoy art activities and make purposeful choices when selecting different resources to convey interesting pictures. They emulate the work of artists skilfully and vary the tone and colour carefully, for example the work of Picasso and Emma Siân Pritchard and analysing the style of Aiden Saunders as he follows the art methods of the Celts. Pupils' creating work is displayed very attractively in the colourful learning environment, which fosters their pride while celebrating their work.

Most pupils' physical skills are developing soundly as a result of a variety of experiences and activities. The youngest pupils apply themselves enthusiastically to physical activities in the outdoor area and when taking part in physical exercise sessions. Older pupils develop their physical skills successfully by taking part in a range of physical activities as part of their theme, including dance, yoga and various sports in after-school clubs.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils feel happy and safe under the care of all of the school's staff. Pupils show pride in their school and talk positively about the staff. Nearly all feel that they are respected and treated fairly and this contributes positively to the school's familial, homely and inclusive ethos. Pupils know whom to approach for support if anything is worrying them and are confident that staff will listen to them. Most pupils enjoy being at school and talk enthusiastically about their learning and all of the experiences that are provided for them. Nearly all pupils say that they are happy at the school because of the care and kindness of the staff, the content of lessons and the exciting extra-curricular experiences.

During lessons and at break times, nearly all pupils behave very well and treat each other with respect and courtesy. Most pupils listen attentively and respond appropriately to activities in their classes and during outdoor lessons. They contribute purposefully by offering their own ideas and co-operate successfully with their peers and others. For example, by producing mind maps, they express their views and offer ideas about the content of their theme lessons at the beginning of each term. They show enthusiasm and interest in their work and respond well to support and feedback from staff. Most pupils show perseverance and resilience when completing tasks and convey a high level of pride in their work.

Most pupils understand the importance of keeping fit and eating healthily. They explain the advantages of eating healthy foods and why they should not eat too much fat and sugar. Most pupils are aware of the positive effect of physical exercise activities and enjoy taking part in various sessions, including 'Gwener Gwenu' ('Smile Friday') well-being activities.

Most pupils are developing as ethical citizens through their work to raise awareness and funds to help others in Ukraine.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning through their creative work. Most develop their drawing skills enthusiastically. For example, across the school, they experiment with a variety of media and materials adventurously to produce artwork of a high standard.

Most pupils are developing an understanding of their rights and are aware of the right to be safe. Most have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe online through their work with the police. The digital detectives have created a list of online programs and apps that are suitable and unsuitable for children and this has reinforced many pupils' awareness.

Most pupils take their roles seriously across the school. For example, they make a valuable contribution to the school café by creating timetables for working at the café and producing various menus. They show a clear understanding of their responsibilities and play an important part in the decisions that are made about the running of the café as a business that is open to the community.

Teaching and learning experiences

The school's vision for the Curriculum for Wales is developing effectively. All teachers plan purposefully in line with the six areas of learning and experience and refer consistently to the principles of the four purposes. The '*Cyfoethion ein Cwm*' ('The Riches of our Valley') curriculum is based firmly on teaching literacy, numeracy and digital skills and enabling pupils to apply them in themes that broaden and celebrate their knowledge of their local area, their heritage and the wider world.

Teachers plan together effectively to ensure that all pupils are given valuable experiences that enrich their thorough knowledge and awareness of the local area and further afield. Pupils benefit from imaginative experiences of outdoor learning, for example when investigating a crime scene on the school grounds to discover who was guilty of the unfortunate act.

In the youngest classes, basic learning principles have been embedded firmly. Nearly all activities in the areas develop pupils' independence skilfully across the areas of learning and experience. Teachers are supported highly effectively by a skilful team of assistants who encourage pupils to learn effectively, particularly in the outdoor area. Stimulating visual resources that promote linguistic and number skills are prominent in these areas to reinforce learning effectively.

The weekly *Caffi Clic a Chlonc* café provides very valuable opportunities for all pupils to develop their skills and apply real-life skills by working with members of the

community and parents. For example, pupils produce menus, cook food to be served to parents and handle money when selling the produce and discovering the profit.

Teachers' plans are interesting and suitable for the pupils' age and ability. However, the context is flexible and teachers adapt learning activities by considering pupils' responses during lessons. Plans are also inclusive, which promotes a fair opportunity for all pupils to benefit from experiences, particularly those who receive free school meals and those with profound learning needs.

Welshness is one of the school's important values and is a clear priority for all staff and pupils. Provision to develop Welsh communication skills in formal and informal teaching activities is purposeful and has a positive effect on the standard of most pupils' spoken language by the time they reach the top of the school.

Responsibility is another of the school's values and supporting the development of all pupils' social and emotional skills is at the heart of the work of all staff. Staff help pupils to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding that they need to make healthy lifestyle choices, for example learning about eating and drinking healthily and raising awareness of online safety. Supporting pupils' well-being and mental health is an integral part of the school's work. This includes providing quiet areas for vulnerable pupils, well-being activities in the classrooms and outdoors and the use of attractive displays that encourage them to discuss their feelings openly.

Staff have a very good relationship with pupils, which fosters a positive and supportive environment for learning. They set clear learning objectives and develop learning activities with a suitable pace. They use a range of original experiences to engage pupils' interest and enthusiasm. A majority of teachers use various questioning techniques very effectively to extend pupils' understanding of different learning contexts.

Many teachers provide pupils with useful oral feedback, which supports them to improve their work purposefully. Pupils are given purposeful opportunities to assess their own work and that of their peers, in line with the activity's expectations. By doing so, most pupils know how to improve their work and are able to explain the next steps in their learning. However, best practice has not been disseminated fully across the school. As a result, the high expectations have not become embedded in all classes.

Care, support and guidance

Staff are dedicated to creating a caring and warm community for pupils. There are purposeful working relationships between staff and pupils and they know them very well. The positive environment across the whole school supports pupils to treat everyone with respect, courtesy and kindness. Staff promote the positive behaviour of all pupils effectively and address any instances of bullying robustly. Messages are conveyed on posters, displays around the school and in assemblies.

Pupils' needs in terms of their health and emotional well-being are an obvious priority throughout the school and the school has a clear vision, which ensures that purposeful, creative and physical activities are provided. For example, all pupils benefit from '*Gwener Gwenu*' ('Smile Friday') each week, which includes dance,

drama, art, music, ICT and physical education activities. The school also provides opportunities for pupils to develop their skills across the curriculum and broaden their knowledge and understanding of the business world. Staff also promote the importance of eating healthily and encourage physical fitness through a range of extra-curricular activities. For example, they have taken part in a project that focuses on encouraging pupils to taste a variety of different vegetables and follow healthy recipes online. Staff are aware of the needs of disadvantaged families and ensure that all extra-curricular activities are accessible to all pupils.

The school provides very effective provision for pupils with additional learning needs. This includes specific and purposeful intervention programmes to improve literacy and numeracy skills. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) makes good use of the support that is available from external agencies and is implementing the new procedures of the Additional Learning Needs Act effectively. The school's leaders track the progress of pupils with additional learning needs in relation to their personal targets. The school communicates purposefully with the parents of pupils with additional learning needs about their progress in meetings and by updating the pupil-centred documentation. As a result of monitoring and evaluating provision regularly, most pupils with ALN make sound progress against their targets.

The school provides opportunities that contribute towards developing pupils' moral skills and support pupils to treat others with empathy. For example, they hold activities to raise awareness of fair trade goods and raise money to help farmers in poor countries.

Collective worship arrangements support pupils to develop their spiritual skills by broadening their understanding of Christianity and thinking about their own values. Pupils are given opportunities to study other religions, such as Islam, and a festival of countries is held to give pupils an opportunity to study various cultures and traditions. In the foundation phase, opportunities are provided for pupils to celebrate the traditions of the Chinese New Year.

The school has appropriate procedures for monitoring attendance. It rewards pupils for good attendance and works very closely with families and the welfare officer.

All staff understand their responsibilities in terms of safeguarding pupils. These arrangements meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. The school also provides a range of opportunities for pupils to learn about their rights as children. For example, agencies such as the NSPCC work with pupils and discuss their rights.

Leaders and teachers communicate effectively with parents and carers by using a good range of social media, in addition to their willingness to discuss with parents directly where necessary. This ensures that they respond to any concerns immediately. The school has also continued to support and communicate effectively with parents and carers throughout the pandemic and during the months that followed.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and leadership team provide the school with very robust leadership, which ensures an effective strategic direction and a culture that promotes continuous

improvement. They have a clear vision that is based on ensuring that the well-being of pupils and staff is a central part of the school's life. They share this vision very successfully with staff, pupils, parents and governors. As a result, everyone has high expectations of themselves, each other and of pupils' standards of achievement.

The leadership systems that have been established across the school are effective and members of the senior leadership team and other members of staff work well together to fulfil their roles thoroughly and support the headteacher purposefully. Leaders plan very purposefully to meet local and national priorities. Staff address recent developments in education enthusiastically. For example, they are preparing for the Curriculum for Wales and introducing key elements of the Additional Learning Needs Act effectively. The whole-school focus on promoting the Welsh language and Welshness is consistent and this develops pupils' pride in their identity and heritage.

The school's priorities for improvement are based on a good range of first-hand evidence and the staff's understanding of them is sound. There are effective systems for reviewing progress, identifying areas for improvement and taking steps to implement them. These include a careful analysis of pupils' progress and outcomes, scrutiny of work and lesson observations. Staff and members of the governing body play an inclusive part in the process of monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement. As a result, they know their school very well and address most of the improvements quickly and successfully.

Regular staff meetings are held to organise and implement activities to achieve the agreed priorities. All teachers are responsible for an area of learning and experience. Support staff are key members of the school's team and contribute regularly to improving pupils' standards of learning, well-being and social skills.

Members of the governing body have a sound knowledge of the school's performance and the effect of its procedures on pupils' standards and well-being. They share responsibilities conscientiously and conduct purposeful visits to evaluate the effect of provision on pupils' standards and progress. They challenge the school sensibly on suitable issues and contribute appropriately to producing clear procedures and strategies for improvement. They work with leaders and pupils to ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Expenditure links well with the school's objectives and improvement plans. The headteacher and governors use the school budget effectively to enrich the curriculum and raise pupils' standards. They link expenditure appropriately with the priorities in the development plan and monitor funding carefully to ensure its best use. Leaders use the pupil development grant sensibly, which has a positive effect on the progress and well-being of specific groups of pupils.

Another robust feature of leadership is the purposeful opportunities that enable staff at all levels to develop professionally. This includes opportunities to receive purposeful training on the developments of the Curriculum for Wales. Performance management procedures promote staff's professional learning well and have a positive effect on standards. The headteacher supports teachers to conduct research on aspects of their classroom practice to identify the effect on pupils' attainment. The school has an active relationship with the secondary school and the remainder of the

schools in the cluster, which includes producing strategic plans to introduce the requirements of the Curriculum for Wales.

The relationship between the school and parents is sound. The school communicates with them effectively to ensure that they are aware of day-to-day events.

As a result of all of these positive aspects, there is a successful culture of lively and effective co-operation, which contributes significantly to the school's welcoming and warm 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.

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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