



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

**A report on**

**Ysgol Calon y Dderwen**

**Newtown  
Powys  
SY16 1EG**

**Date of inspection: October 2024**

**by**

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

## About Ysgol Calon y Dderwen

|                                                                                                                                                                                                |                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Name of provider                                                                                                                                                                               | Ysgol Calon y Dderwen |
| Local authority                                                                                                                                                                                | Powys County Council  |
| Language of the provider                                                                                                                                                                       | English               |
| School category according to Welsh-medium provision                                                                                                                                            |                       |
| Type of school                                                                                                                                                                                 | Primary               |
| Religious character                                                                                                                                                                            | *                     |
| Number of pupils on roll                                                                                                                                                                       | 250                   |
| Pupils of statutory school age                                                                                                                                                                 | 211                   |
| Number in nursery classes                                                                                                                                                                      | N/A                   |
| Percentage of 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 Primary is 22.9%) | 33.6%                 |
| Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Primary is 11.1%)               | 39.8%                 |
| Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home                                                                                                                                                   | 3.6*                  |
| Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language                                                                                                                                    | 4.3%                  |
| Date of headteacher appointment                                                                                                                                                                | 01/01/2015            |
| Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)                                                                                                                                              | n/a                   |
| Start date of inspection                                                                                                                                                                       | 14/10/2024            |

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: [mylocalschool.gov.wales](http://mylocalschool.gov.wales)

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

## Summary

The headteacher led the amalgamation of the Infant and Junior schools skilfully. Through consultation and collaboration, he ensures that staff at Ysgol Calon Y Dderwen work as one effective team. Staff have beneficial professional learning to support pupils' well-being and ensure that this aspect of the school's work is at the heart of everything they do. Provision, such as "Y Cwtch" nurture resource, supports pupils with individual needs well. Staff commitment to enrichment activities, such as residential trips, is admirable. Leaders use grant funding purposefully to ensure that these residential opportunities are available to all pupils, including those eligible for free school meals.

Staff have engaged in professional learning to develop their Welsh language skills. They speak Welsh regularly in lessons and around school and inspire pupils to do the same. As a result, many pupils' progress and enjoyment of learning Welsh is strong.

Teachers share appropriate learning objectives and use questioning to develop pupils' understanding effectively. However, feedback does not always provide pupils with enough specific information on how to improve and not all teachers have high enough expectations of pupils, particularly the more able.

Many pupils develop oracy and reading skills effectively. However, a minority of pupils, in particular more able pupils, do not develop their writing skills as well as they could. Many pupils develop their mathematical skills suitably. However, they do not apply these skills in problem-solving and reasoning activities as well as they could. This is something the school recognises and has started to address. Over time, most pupils do not develop a broad enough range of digital skills. Overall, most pupils make suitable progress from their starting points.

The school is highly inclusive, collaborates with external agencies and modifies provision well to support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) successfully. Provision for pupils with ALN is strong.

Leaders show the capacity to implement improvement strategy effectively. For example, their work to improve standards of pupils' well-being, reading and Welsh have been successful. However, their work to improve other aspects of the school's work is less effective.

The governing body supports the school well, balancing challenge and support successfully.

## Recommendations

We have made three recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Further improve teaching and assessment to ensure that teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils, particularly the more able
- R2 Sharpen the school's procedures for self-evaluation and monitoring
- R3 Ensure that the curriculum supports all pupils to develop their writing, problem-solving and digital skills effectively

## What happens next

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

## Main evaluation

The headteacher skilfully managed the amalgamation of the previous Infant and Junior schools, and with his deputy head, prioritise the development of a cohesive team successfully. Through consultation with the school community and by carefully considering their views, they foster a strong sense of collaboration and teamwork among the staff. The headteacher works closely with staff and parents to establish a nurturing and inclusive school ethos, where pupils' well-being is at the centre of the school's work. Leaders are turning the school vision of 'Planting happiness, growing success' into action.

Leaders' relationships with parents, carers and the wider community are exemplary. The school knows its families well and communication with them is strong. Leaders listen to the families' needs carefully and provide good support. For example, they provide access to free uniform and keep the cost of the school day to a minimum.

Staff are committed to pupils' well-being. They treat pupils with a high degree of care and respect. Teachers and teaching assistants engage in a range of professional learning to develop pupils' well-being and are highly skilled. Leaders are flexible in their approach and respond to the needs of individual pupils thoughtfully. For example, they have developed the nurture provision "Y Cwtch" that supports pupils with high levels of social and emotional needs well. Enrichment activities aimed at promoting well-being and developing personal and social skills are a strength of the school. The school uses grant funding effectively to ensure that pupils from all backgrounds have access to these opportunities. For example, the Pupil Development Grant is used to ensure that pupils eligible for free school meals access residential trips, which helps build pupils' confidence, raises their aspirations, and fosters a love of learning. Most pupils enjoy school and have good levels of well-being, and their behaviour is good.

The school's progress in designing and refining its curriculum is suitable. Teachers provide effective opportunities for pupils to influence what they learn. This supports teachers to plan a range of stimulating activities that engage pupils well in their learning. However, curriculum provision to develop pupils' skills progressively is inconsistent and, as a result, pupils do not develop their writing, problem-solving or digital skills as well as they could.

Provision for pupils with ALN is good. The school works in collaboration with external agencies and implements individualised programs to ensure that most pupils with ALN make suitable progress. The school is proactive in working with parents to identify, monitor and review the progress of individual pupils. Teachers ensure that pupils with ALN have a voice in decisions related to their learning, ensuring accessibility to lessons through adaptations like incorporating sign language.

Senior leaders clearly understand the school's strengths and areas needing improvement. For example, they correctly identify the need to improve pupils' problem-solving skills. They have taken action to address this, although these actions are at an early stage of development. Over time, the school has implemented a range of successful improvement plans. For example, ensuring consistency of provision for teaching reading has improved pupils' reading skills across the school.

In the most successful examples of school improvement, leaders have high expectations, provide staff with professional learning and monitor the impact on pupils purposefully.

**Spotlight: A whole-school approach to developing the Welsh language**

Staff have embraced professional learning opportunities to improve their Welsh language skills. They speak Welsh regularly during lessons and throughout the school day. The 'Criw Cymraeg' further promotes this, and pupils have positive attitudes towards learning and speaking Welsh. For example, they use Welsh spontaneously in lessons and sing Welsh songs proudly during assemblies. The school's approach to promoting and teaching Welsh ensures that many pupils' progress in using and enjoying the language is strong.

Whilst the school's focus on pupil well-being, reading and Welsh has been successful, strategic actions to address academic progress in all areas of learning are inconsistent.

Where school improvement work has been less successful, leaders do not focus actions and monitoring processes precisely on the aspects of teaching and learning that are most in need of improvement.

Most teachers use effective questioning techniques to assess pupils' understanding and advance their learning. They recap prior learning successfully and adjust provision to ensure that vulnerable pupils make appropriate progress. In the most successful lessons, teachers match activities to pupils' stage of development and have high expectations. However, expectations are not consistently high across the school, particularly for the most able pupils.

Teachers use a consistent approach when assessing pupils' learning. They make sure that pupils understand the success criteria and learning objectives, which helps guide their work. However, feedback does not always provide pupils with enough specific information on how to improve and understand what their next steps in learning are.

Many pupils enter the school with literacy and numeracy skills below the expected level for their age. As a result of strong foundation learning provision, they quickly settle into routines and soon start to make progress.

Staff are effective language role models, providing valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. As pupils move through the school, they gain confidence in expressing themselves clearly on a range of topics. Older pupils use subject-specific vocabulary with increasing accuracy, and they engage respectfully in debates, such as discussing the benefits of living near the sea. Most pupils develop their reading skills appropriately. The youngest pupils quickly learn letter sounds and blend them to form simple words. By Year 6, most pupils read fluently and with expression. They demonstrate a good understanding of vocabulary and can infer meaning from their reading.

Across the school, many pupils develop their writing skills appropriately. Due to a range of beneficial activities, most of the youngest pupils develop their fine motor skills well. As pupils move through the school, they develop their ability to write for a range of purposes. They learn to punctuate sentences accurately with increasingly successful attempts at spelling. However, a minority of pupils, particularly the more able, do not develop their writing skills as well as they could. Overall, many older pupils do not develop a fluid writing style and do not present their work as well as they could.

Many pupils develop their mathematical skills suitably. Many of the youngest pupils use resources to develop their understanding of number effectively. Older pupils work suitably across the four rules of number and their understanding of place value is appropriate. However, due to the lack of consistent opportunities, many pupils do not develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills as well as they could.

When given the opportunity, pupils develop a few digital skills appropriately. For example, younger pupils gain an early understanding of coding, through exploring how to programme a toy and older pupils create presentations about countries around the world. However, overall, pupils do not develop a broad enough range of digital skills during their time at school.

Over time, most pupils, including those eligible for free school meals, make suitable progress from their starting points.

The governing body supports the school well. Governors are actively involved in self-evaluation processes and work closely with leaders to identify areas for further improvement. They have a clear understanding of the school's priorities and strike a good balance between challenging and supporting the leadership team.

## **Additional information**

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for site security do not give any cause for concern.

The school has appropriate arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders and governors manage the school's finances appropriately, including the use of the pupil development grant.

## Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read 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 classes, including learning support groups 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 and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- 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



## Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

|               |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| nearly all =  | with very few exceptions |
| most =        | 90% or more              |
| many =        | 70% or more              |
| a majority =  | over 60%                 |
| half =        | 50%                      |
| around half = | close to 50%             |
| a minority =  | below 40%                |
| few =         | below 20%                |
| very few =    | less than 10%            |

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.wales](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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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