



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

A report on
Ysgol Gyfun Penweddig

Llanbadarn Road
Llangawsai
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY23 3QN

Date of inspection: October 2024

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Gyfun Penweddig

Name of provider	Ysgol Gyfun Penweddig
Local authority	Ceredigion County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	Welsh – Category C3
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	598
Pupils of statutory school age	487
Number in the sixth form	111
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year <i>average</i> (<i>The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the secondary sector is 21.1%</i>)	6.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (<i>The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the secondary sector is 11.2%</i>)	12.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	60.2%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	03/09/2024
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	16/01/2017
Start date of inspection	21/10/2024

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

Summary

Caring for pupils' well-being is given a prominent place at Ysgol Gyfun Penweddig. As a result, many pupils demonstrate respect for each other and positive attitudes to learning. Sixth-form pupils are an asset to the school and model very positive behaviours and attitudes for younger pupils. Robust arrangements for monitoring and promoting pupils' attendance have led to significant improvements.

In many cases, teachers ensure that pupils develop a good understanding of their subject and make sound progress. A few teachers do this particularly effectively, inspiring pupils and planning carefully to respond to their needs. In the few cases where teaching is not effective, neither the expectations or the level of challenge for pupils are suitable, therefore they do not make as much progress and they tend to lose focus on their work.

Overall, many pupils make satisfactory progress in their literacy, numeracy and digital competence skills over time. However, provision across the curriculum is not co-ordinated well enough to ensure that there are appropriate opportunities to develop these skills progressively.

Despite the period of instability in leadership over recent years, senior leaders, through their loyalty and perseverance, have succeeded in maintaining pupils' standards of attainment and well-being. This has provided the new headteacher with a solid foundation on which to begin his work. The headteacher's vision of nurturing respect, Welshness and effort permeates all the school's work. In a short period, he has succeeded in forging beneficial links with parents, building the staff's confidence and ensuring that senior leaders are visible to pupils.

Leaders identify the school's main strengths and areas for improvement appropriately based on beneficial activities to evaluate provision. However, leaders at all levels do not evaluate their work sufficiently by its effect on pupils' standards and achievement. As a result, they are unable to measure success in full or, in turn, plan for improvement in sufficient detail.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Improve aspects of teaching to raise expectations and the level of challenge and meet the needs of all pupils
- R2 Co-ordinate provision to develop pupils' skills across the curriculum so that pupils make continuous progress
- R3 Ensure that leaders evaluate the school's work by its effect on pupils' standards

What happens next

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

Main findings

Teaching and learning

Many teachers foster good working relationships with pupils and set high expectations in terms of behaviour and dedication. There is a purposeful learning environment in their classrooms. As a result, many pupils behave well in lessons and have positive attitudes to learning.

Most teachers have sound subject knowledge and many are effective language models who promote good use of subject vocabulary. They explain concepts effectively and give clear instructions that enable pupils to know what is expected of them. They walk around the class regularly to monitor pupils' progress as they complete their work and offer useful oral feedback, as necessary. As a result, many pupils develop a good subject understanding and make sound progress.

In the few cases where teaching is very effective, teachers enable pupils to make strong and swift progress because they:

- demonstrate contagious energy and enthusiasm for their subjects, which inspires pupils
- plan carefully, model skilfully and ensure a level of challenge that enables pupils to achieve to the best of their ability
- ask probing questions that challenge pupils to deepen their understanding and develop their skills
- provide relevant and interesting experiences

In a few lessons, there are shortcomings in teaching which means that pupils do not make consistent enough progress and, at time, lose interest in their learning. Often in these lessons:

- teachers do not have high enough expectations and do not challenge pupils well enough
- there are shortcomings in teachers' planning, for example they do not give sufficient consideration to what they want pupils to learn
- they spend too much time presenting and limit pupils' opportunities to work independently
- teachers do not use appropriate strategies to manage behaviour and meet the needs of all pupils
- the quality and appropriateness of experiences for pupils are too varied

Many teachers question appropriately to test how much pupils know and understand. Only a few question skilfully to probe or deepen pupils' understanding. This limits the development of pupils' thinking skills and their ability to develop extended answers.

In a minority of cases, teachers provide pupils with useful written comments on how to improve their work and extend their learning. At times, comments include an additional question or challenge or give pupils specific and clear directions on how to improve their work. In the best cases, pupils respond well to the advice and re-draft and improve their work. Too often, teachers' comments are superficial or overly complimentary. In a few cases, pupils are offered very little feedback.

On the whole, pupils are given suitable opportunities to practise their literacy, numeracy and digital competence skills in various subjects. However, these opportunities are not planned or co-ordinated strategically enough. As a result, experiences do not allow progressive development in pupils' skills in different contexts across the curriculum.

Many pupils listen attentively to the teacher's explanations and instructions and respect the contributions of their peers. They answer orally in Welsh confidently and play an active part in class discussions. Many pupils are proficient in speaking English and use rich vocabulary. Where they are given an opportunity, a majority of pupils respond well by offering extended explanations and making good use of subject terminology. In a few lessons, pupils are happy to question the teacher and translate easily from English to Welsh. At times, a few pupils turn to English when working together when they are expected to discuss in Welsh.

Many pupils use their elementary reading skills in both languages competently to gather information and identify facts. They follow written instructions successfully. A majority succeed in analysing pieces of text by reading between the lines, for example when considering the poems of Welsh poets in Welsh and English lessons. When they are given an opportunity to do so, they read confidently and vary their tone of voice to convey meaning, for example when reading a passage from the novel Prism by Manon Steffan Ros. Overall, there are not enough purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills across the curriculum.

On the whole, many pupils write with technical accuracy in Welsh and English. They structure their work in sensible paragraphs and sentences with correct syntax. A few pupils develop their writing very effectively and express themselves in a more sophisticated manner. Overall, many write well in both languages for different audiences, producing scripts, letters and opinion pieces. A few make careless mistakes in their spelling and grammar. Due to a lack of opportunities, pupils do not develop their extended writing skills adequately in subjects other than Welsh and English.

In their mathematics lessons, many pupils demonstrate sound number skills. They develop their understanding of indices, square numbers and factors appropriately. By the end of Year 9, pupils succeed in demonstrating a good understanding of ratios and fractions. In other subjects, many succeed in applying their basic number skills, for example when calculating percentages in science and calculating the profit from selling cakes in their technology lessons. However, there are very few opportunities

for them to develop and apply their number skills across the curriculum in relevant subjects.

A few subjects provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to use their digital skills. In their graphics lessons, for example, many succeed in using a 3D design package to make designs of objects. They develop their digital skills appropriately in digital technology lessons. For example, they benefit from opportunities to develop their coding skills, use spreadsheets and present information. Outside those lessons, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their advanced digital skills.

Many pupils develop their physical skills well and show high levels of fitness in their physical education lessons. They understand the importance and effect of exercise on different parts of the body. A majority develop creative skills suitably, for example by creating a watercolour picture emulating the style of the artist Mary Lloyd Jones.

Overall, sixth-form pupils demonstrate extremely positive attitudes towards their work and school life. They engage well in lessons and contribute positively to discussions. Nearly all recall previous work very well and many produce polished written work, for example in their religious education essays.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for most pupils and includes a variety of opportunities in key stage 4, such as agriculture and construction. The school works effectively with other schools and providers to offer alternative curricular opportunities in key stage 4 and the sixth form, such as hairdressing and blacksmithing courses. The school has an appropriate overview of the experiences provided to meet the requirements of Curriculum for Wales in each area of learning and experience.

Beneficial attention is given to aspects of personal and social education through Health and Well-being lessons in Years 7-11 under themes such as 'Me Myself', 'Relationships with others' and 'Culture and Values'. This makes a valuable contribution to pupils' sound understanding of the importance of treating each other with respect and friendship.

Transition arrangements from primary to secondary are robust. In terms of the curriculum, there are valuable opportunities for departments to work with primary school staff to provide subject experiences for Year 6 pupils. Although in its early days, there are suitable arrangements in a few subjects to co-ordinate provision and ensure continuity and progression between Years 5 and 6 and the secondary phase.

There is a range of rich extra-curricular opportunities for pupils which build on their curricular experiences. This includes the Young Enterprise Challenge which gave pupils a valuable opportunity to represent the school in Sicily. Other pupils have benefitted from the opportunity to compete in a debating competition in English, as well as receiving mentoring from the local university's modern foreign languages students.

The school promotes tolerance and celebrates diversity successfully. Pupils are given appropriate opportunities to understand the history and experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities through literature and opportunities to meet authors from these backgrounds, for example by attending workshops as part of the

Hay Festival. The 'Agored' group meets on a weekly basis and provides a homely and safe environment for pupils who are part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender+ community. There are a number of rich opportunities to celebrate Welshness within the curriculum, for example by studying Welsh artists in art lessons and the poet R.S. Thomas in English lessons. The Welsh language is given prominent attention outside lessons; for example, pupils take part in local and national Eisteddfodau, musicals and listen to Welsh music regularly.

Well-being, care, support and guidance

The school's vision to nurture respectful, Welsh pupils who strive to do their best has been shared clearly with all stakeholders. Staff encourage pupils to foster these values and, as a result, many pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and treat their adults and peers with respect.

The care for pupils' well-being is strong across the school. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development purposefully through assemblies, the health and well-being curriculum and activities during the morning periods. They adapt provision as necessary to respond to findings from surveys or events within the school. Pastoral staff know the pupils well and use information about them to provide purposefully in order to respond to the well-being needs of individuals.

The school works with a variety of supportive external agencies and this adds beneficially to well-being provision. For example, there is effective and positive co-operation between the local police, the local authority's Early Help Hub service and the youth service.

The school complies with the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act and provision for pupils' additional learning needs (ALN) is a strength. Beneficial intervention sessions for individuals help them to practise and improve their reading and number skills. One-page profiles are comprehensive and beneficial, but it is not always easy for teachers to digest all the information to identify how they could support pupils purposefully.

Beneficial opportunities and provision are organised to support pupils to consider career options. For example, they value and enjoy varied and regular sessions to raise their awareness of options for the future. Purposeful support is provided to help pupils move to the next stages in their lives.

Effective transition arrangements between the primary and secondary school help to alleviate anxiety and support pupils to familiarise themselves with the school. There are additional specific arrangements for those who come from small schools. As a result, most settle well at the school.

There are many beneficial opportunities for groups of pupils to participate in the community. For example, the school choir takes pride in the opportunity to celebrate with actors from Pobol y Cwm as they celebrated their 50th anniversary. Pupils with ALN benefit from socialising and working together as they volunteer in local businesses and attend the town library.

Good opportunities are provided for pupils to express their views and influence school life through the year councils and school council. For example, their ideas have contributed to refining the reward system and, as a result, pupils believe that this system is more suitable and purposeful. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to have their say about their learning experiences within subjects.

There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills, for example through the school council and by running the enterprise club. In the enterprise club, sixth-form pupils use their previous experiences to mentor other pupils within the club to start a business. They also make a valuable contribution to school life through activities such as running the 'Clwb Gwneud Ymdrech trwy Siarad y Gymraeg (GYTS)' and refereeing and training sports teams. Pupils benefit from a wide range of beneficial opportunities, representing the school in sports, school shows and Eisteddfodau.

The pastoral team has appropriate structures to deal with the few instances where pupils show a lack of respect, Welshness or effort. However, teachers are not always consistent enough when applying the processes for dealing with pupils who misbehave in lessons. Leaders analyse data effectively to identify pupils who need emotional support and provide intervention programmes for them. The school works purposefully with the local authority to provide an alternative curriculum for any pupils who are at risk of being excluded.

Spotlight: Improving attendance

The school's tight processes for promoting attendance are a significant strength. Leaders analyse a variety of data regularly to identify trends in the attendance of school years and groups of pupils, and make useful comparisons. The importance of attendance is shared effectively with parents. There is a graduated method of intervening as soon as pupils' attendance begins to cause concern and leaders ensure that all staff are responsible for promoting good attendance. Regular evaluations are conducted of the effectiveness of the school's work to improve pupils' attendance, with strategies adapted as necessary. The school's work in this area has led to significant improvements.

The school's attendance rates are significantly higher than what is seen in similar schools, although they continue to be lower than the school's pre-pandemic rates. The attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average and also higher than the attendance of this group of pupils in schools with a similar context.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding. Purposeful and regular training is provided for staff and governors, which ensures that they have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. Detailed records are kept of any concerns identified by staff, which allows leaders to build a picture of pupils' needs and take timely action as necessary. Staff deal appropriately with the rare instances of concerns that pupils share with them. As a result, most pupils feel safe at the school and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns.

Leading and improving

Since the last inspection, the school has been through significant periods of instability. However, the former acting headteacher and other leaders have shown notable resilience and perseverance in leading staff and ensuring pupils' well-being, improving attendance and maintaining robust teaching. This has provided a firm foundation for the new headteacher who has taken up the role very recently.

The headteacher has a clear vision which is based firmly on core and relevant values, namely Welshness, respect and effort. He communicates this vision eloquently and consistently to the whole school community. The headteacher is a wise and measured leader who has undertaken his role with enthusiasm and decisiveness. In the short time since he was appointed, he has succeeded in strengthening the sense of team among the staff and providing regular and convenient opportunities for parents to come to discuss any aspect of the school. He has also adopted an open method of communication with pupils and staff and streamlined some processes sensibly. The headteacher has prioritised his presence and that of the rest of the senior leadership around the school. As a result, they are very visible and engage with pupils and staff continuously, which is very much appreciated.

The headteacher is supported very firmly by the rest of the senior leadership team. They uphold the headteacher's values and are committed to ensuring improvements through robust and collaborative co-operation. Leaders give due attention to national priorities such as the development of the Welsh language and ensure a strong culture of safeguarding. The school also have strong arrangements to reduce the adverse effect of poverty and deprivation on pupils' well-being and achievement. Curriculum for Wales developments are appropriate, on the whole, but provision to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills increasingly is underdeveloped.

There is a suitable line management structure. Over time, leaders have identified a few staff who need support to improve their practice and have put suitable arrangements in place to support them in making improvements. These arrangements have had a positive effect on many of them over time. However, processes to address the underachievement of a very few staff have not been robust enough to ensure necessary improvements.

Quality assurance processes are appropriate across the school. Senior leaders consider a suitable range of evidence to identify strengths and areas for improvement. These include an evaluation of pupils' outcomes, learning walks and activities to scrutinise pupils' work and ensure a good overview of some aspects of provision. However, evaluations of lessons and pupils' work focus mainly on what teachers do and the teaching strategies included in lessons. Insufficient consideration is given to the level of challenge and how suitable teachers' expectations are. In addition, not enough attention is given to the effect that teaching has on pupils' progress, understanding and skills development.

As a result of robust input and guidance from senior leaders and external support, the ability of subject leaders to evaluate their work and conduct quality assurance activities has strengthened. This has enabled them to make valid evaluations of the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility. However, most of these leaders do

not consider the effect of teaching on pupils' standards and achievement in lessons and their progress over time. Leaders at all levels occasionally seek the views of pupils and parents about the school's work. This has led to modifications in a few important areas. Leaders do not seek pupils views regularly enough about their experiences of how and what they learn.

Performance management arrangements are appropriate and there is a direct link between the objectives for individuals and the school's priorities. The nature of the objectives is not always linked to improving practice and does not allow leaders to hold staff to account. Valuable meetings are held during the year to discuss staff development and progress against the objectives. Often, there is not enough of a link between what teachers and leaders do and its effect on pupils' progress and achievement.

The school provides an appropriate range of professional learning experiences for all staff. This includes guidance on teaching strategies and valuable opportunities to work with other schools and external practitioners to strengthen leadership at all levels.

Governors are hard-working and conscientious and are passionate about the school's success. They hold valuable discussion sessions during parents' evenings and are enthusiastic about supporting and working with leaders of areas of learning and experience. They fulfil their role as critical friends robustly and challenge leaders on a number of important areas. This has led to improvements in terms of curricular provision and well-being over time.

The headteacher, governors and the business officer work together effectively to manage funding. They monitor the use of grants appropriately, including the pupil development grant. Recently, they have made sensible decisions to reduce expenditure. The school is working closely with the local education authority to reduce the small financial deficit.

The school has responded successfully to a majority of the recommendations from the last inspection. Over time, leaders have had a positive effect on important aspects such as ensuring attendance levels that are consistently higher than other similar schools, the quality of provision for pupils with additional learning needs and pupils' extensive participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The effect of leadership on improving specific aspects of teaching and provision to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills has not been robust enough.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are not a cause for concern.

The school's arrangements for the safety of the site are not a cause for concern.

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

Leaders and governors manage the school's funding 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 questionnaires and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers, staff and the governing body/members of the management committee 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, 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

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report refers 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 (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales>)

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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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