



# Report summary for parents and carers on Ysgol Y Gogarth

**Date of inspection: October 2024**

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

# Summary

Ysgol Y Gogarth has recently faced some significant and unexpected challenges. During this time staff, pupils and governors have, and continue to, show considerable courage and perseverance.

The unexpected death of the previous headteacher was a significant shock to staff, pupils, the wider school community and, more generally, the additional learning needs community in Wales. In addition, and shortly after the death of the headteacher, the vice chair of governors, previously the long-standing chair of governors, also passed away. Like the headteacher, was committed to the pupils and staff of Ysgol Y Gogarth.

Members of the governing body and existing leadership team were required to take on new roles and responsibilities. Senior leaders immediately stepped up into the positions of acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. These positions were made permanent in April 2023 and July 2023, respectively.

Staff across the school have pupils' well-being and safety at heart. The safeguarding culture is robust, and all staff understand their roles and responsibilities in contributing to pupils' safety and well-being.

Teaching staff know the pupils well and have a clear understanding of their additional learning needs. They have developed nurturing relationships with the pupils. As a result, most pupils engage happily in their learning and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Learner voice is a particular strength at the school and this successfully fosters a community and sense of belonging where "Children come First".

Most pupils at Ysgol y Gogarth make strong progress from their initial starting points and across a range of skills, due to the valuable support and encouragement they receive from staff. However, overall, the quality of teaching is variable.

Class routines are well established and provide valuable stability in many classes. Transition from one activity to another is well managed. As a result, most pupils know, understand and follow classroom routines and expectations readily. This supports pupils to participate fully in their learning.

Overall, many members of teaching staff are effective role models who approach their work with enthusiasm and energy. Overall, they create welcoming and positive learning environments.

Curriculum experiences develop as pupils progress through the school and teachers planning builds upon prior experiences and skills development. The curriculum provides numerous opportunities for pupils to learn to develop healthy lifestyle choices, complemented by an extensive after-school clubs, including many sporting activities.

Many older pupils access an on-site residential centre allowing them to develop their independent living skills in real life contexts. It is comprehensive and strategically designed to equip pupils with the skills and independence to successfully navigate their next steps and adult life. The school has a long standing and beneficial partnership with Ysgol John Bright where pupils are included in mainstream classes including studying a range of subjects at GCSE. The post-16 curriculum offer at Ysgol Y Gogarth is a notable strength.

The school works effectively with a range of external partners to support the additional and medical needs of pupils. The school communicates with parents and carers very effectively and parents recognise and value the strength of this relationship. The governing body also places a high value on the relationship the school has with the parents and carers and has effective communication with families as a priority.

The parent, staff and friends' association are highly active within the school and have raised significant funds to help improve learning opportunities for pupils. They have funded school cycling equipment, helped purchase digital equipment and supported the purchase of a school minibus.

The school has grown considerably in numbers since it opened 10 years ago. To accommodate new pupils, specialist teaching areas and therapy rooms were lost. However, there are well-developed plans to extend the school building. The local authority has provided reassurance that the extension will accommodate existing pupils. There are no plans to increase the number of pupils on roll.

The school uses grants to support the implementation of national priorities well and this impacts positively on, for example, pupils' and families' well-being. Staff absence is high, with an average of three teachers and 15 support staff absent daily throughout 2023-2024 every day. Nearly all of the core school budget is allocated to staffing costs, a situation that is financially unsustainable.

## Recommendations and next steps

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

- R1 Ensure that the most effective teaching and learning is shared across the school
- R2 Improve the analysis of school information to inform coherent improvement priorities
- R3 Continue to work with the local authority to improve staff absence

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

**If you would like to read more about Estyn's evaluation of the school, please follow this link to the [full report](#).**

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