

A report on
Heol Goffa School

**Heol Goffa
Llanelli
Carmarthenshire
SA15 3LS**

Date of inspection: November 2025

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Heol Goffa School

Name of provider	Heol Goffa School
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Maintained Special
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	127
Pupils of statutory school age	105
Number in nursery classes	0
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 Maintained Special is 45.8%)	48.5%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Maintained Special is 100.0%)	100.0%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Lead partner for Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2020
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/03/2017

Start date of inspection	24/11/2025
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Further information

Ysgol Heol Goffa is a local authority day special school situated in Llanelli and maintained by Carmarthenshire local authority. The school provides placements for pupils aged from 3 to 19 years with overlapping additional learning needs.

Nearly all pupils have severe learning difficulties, and most have additional needs in speech, language and communication. A majority also present with profound and multiple learning difficulties or significant physical and medical needs. Many pupils are autistic or experience behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, while a minority have sensory impairments. Very few pupils have attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder.

Currently, there are 127 pupils on roll and increase of 64% since the last inspection.

Nearly all pupils have an individual development plan and just under half are eligible for free school meals. A very few pupils come from an ethnic minority background and a very few pupils are in the care of the local authority. English is the main language of nearly all pupils. The school aims to provide dynamic, enjoyable and challenging learning experiences, which offer opportunities for each pupil to reach their individual potential.

Following a period of considerable uncertainty, the Council, in July 2025 announced that it would “pursue the option” to create a new 150 pupil school to replace Heol Goffa. “...The new school will increase provision for pupils with severe learning difficulties [SLD] and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties [PMLD]....” A replacement to Heol Goffa was first proposed in 2017.

The school was last inspected in March 2017. The headteacher has been in post since 2020.

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

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

Summary

Ysgol Heol Goffa is a welcoming school where pupils feel safe, valued and supported. The headteacher and senior leaders provide calm and steady leadership, creating a positive and stable environment for pupils and staff. The school's vision, "Mae pawb yn gallu – everybody can," is clear in daily life.

Relationships between staff and pupils are very strong. Staff understand pupils' needs well and help them grow in confidence, manage their emotions and enjoy learning. Pupils have a real voice in school life. They help make decisions through school committees and take part in community and national events, which builds their confidence and leadership skills.

Teaching is calm, purposeful and well organised. Staff use clear routines, visual cues and total communication so all pupils can take part fully. Lessons include sensory learning, outdoor activities, creative tasks and group work, helping pupils stay engaged and make steady progress. Teaching assistants play an important part in supporting pupils' learning. Staff check pupils' understanding often and give helpful feedback.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of experiences outside the classroom, such as outdoor learning, enterprise projects, residential trips and sports activities. These are particular strengths of the school. They help pupils learn independence, resilience and real-life skills. Many pupils take on physical challenges like Duke of Edinburgh award or skiing.

The school works closely with families and the community. Projects with older people, music sessions and storytelling visits help pupils build empathy, communication and a sense of belonging.

The lack of a dedicated school nurse affects the level of ongoing medical support available for pupils with complex health needs. In similar schools, a nurse helps coordinate care and support families. Having this role would offer parents more reassurance and help pupils receive consistent, well-coordinated medical support during the school day.

Despite some challenges, Ysgol Heol Goffa continues to provide a caring, ambitious environment where pupils thrive and make strong progress.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Address the concerns identified in the safeguarding letter
- R2 Strengthen quality assurance systems and provide clearer accountability across leadership roles

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Strong, compassionate leadership that sustains stability and shared purpose

Leaders at Ysgol Heol Goffa provide assured and dedicated leadership that has brought stability during a period of considerable uncertainty about the school's future. The headteacher offers measured and purposeful direction, strongly supported by senior leaders. Together, they have built a highly committed staff team and place equal importance on the well-being of both pupils and staff, ensuring that care, safety and emotional support sit at the heart of the school's work. This contributes to a positive school culture in which pupils feel secure, valued and able to make purposeful progress.

The school's inclusive vision, "*Mae pawb yn gallu / everybody can,*" shapes its work effectively. Leaders make good use of well-focused leadership meetings, high-quality professional learning and robust performance management to secure ongoing improvement. Staff feel valued through meaningful involvement in self-evaluation, which sustains a shared sense of purpose and ambition.

The leadership structure supports teaching, learning, wellbeing and day-to-day operations appropriately. However, the wide distribution of responsibilities across the senior team means that accountability and oversight of key systems are not always as clear as they could be. Even so, leaders work together effectively to maintain a school where pupils are happy, attend well and make strong progress in their learning and well-being. Middle leaders are growing in confidence as they develop their roles within this structure.

Governors provide effective support and challenge. They have a secure understanding of the school's strengths, areas for development and financial constraints. However, their ability to influence longer-term financial strategy is limited by unpredictable funding allocations and late confirmation of pupil numbers. This systemic weakness restricts the school's capacity for strategic planning and contributes to an over-reliance on agency staffing despite leaders' best efforts to promote stability.

A nurturing, empowering community where pupils feel safe, valued and able to thrive

Ysgol Heol Goffa is an inclusive, supportive community where pupils feel safe, welcome and respected. Staff show a particularly strong understanding of pupils' needs and provide warm, dignified support. These positive relationships underpin pupils' confidence, emotional regulation and willingness to engage in learning.

The school provides a wide range of enriching activities outside the classroom, including enterprise projects, residential experiences and cultural visits. These opportunities

broaden pupils' horizons and allow them to develop resilience, independence and emotional regulation in real-life contexts. Leaders ensure that pupils with profound and multiple learning needs access adapted and meaningful experiences.

Safeguarding arrangements ensure that pupils are protected. Staff understand their responsibilities well and report concerns appropriately. Leaders work positively with partners, including the school link police officer, to promote pupils' understanding of staying safe. However, a few key policies are out of date and do not reflect important safeguarding issues such as radicalisation.

A dedicated wellbeing team provides valuable therapeutic and sensory support. Pupils benefit from well-structured emotional development sessions and communication-focused interventions. Daily routines and sensory regulation programmes contribute to a calm, nurturing environment. Nearly all pupils demonstrate highly positive behaviour and many make strong improvements in self-regulation and communication over time.

Staff make purposeful adjustments to meet pupils' sensory and feeding needs. They separate food items to reduce sensory discomfort and blend meals appropriately for pupils who require soft diets or are PEG-fed. With sensitive support, pupils are encouraged to explore and try new foods with different tastes, smells and textures, which helps broaden their dietary experiences over time.

Lack of on-site nursing limits consistent medical support for pupils with complex needs

The lack of a dedicated school nurse limits the ongoing health support available for pupils with complex medical needs. Without this on-site clinical role, school staff manage a wide range of healthcare responsibilities and rely on external professionals for updates. This means that day-to-day oversight of pupils' medical needs and routine adjustments to care plans are dependent on the availability of external health services. As a result, pupils and families do not have access to the continuous, on-site health coordination that is typically available in similar specialist settings.

Welsh Government guidance highlights that school nurses play an important role in coordinating care, updating healthcare plans and acting as a link between schools, families and NHS services. In specialist settings across Wales, school nurses contribute to regular monitoring and help ensure that pupils' healthcare plans reflect their current needs.

Purposeful, well-structured teaching that enables pupils to learn, communicate and grow with confidence

Across classes, teaching is generally calm, purposeful and well structured. Predictable routines such as registration activities incorporating songs, signing and visual cues support pupils' readiness to learn. Staff demonstrate strong professional relationships with pupils and a secure understanding of their needs, interests and preferred communication methods.

Planning is typically clear, with relevant and well-sequenced activities. Teachers provide a wide range of learning experiences, including sensory exploration, outdoor learning, group work and creative tasks. These varied approaches maintain engagement and help to reinforce key concepts. Activities are closely matched to pupils' developmental stages, and multi-sensory approaches are particularly effective in sensory and communication-focused sessions.

Where teaching is strongest, staff model language skilfully using a total communication approach. Teachers question pupils effectively to probe understanding, support turn-taking and encourage independence. Well-organised classroom environments maximise pupils' opportunities to participate and make choices, developing their autonomy.

In a very few cases, the pace of lessons is less effective, leading to waiting periods or reduced challenge. In some settings, classroom acoustics hinder attention and whole-class formats reduce opportunities for targeted interaction.

Teaching assistants play an essential role in supporting learning. In nearly all classes, they provide sensitive, well-directed support that helps pupils succeed. In a very few cases, support is more passive and less effective.

Assessment practices are generally prompt, meaningful and celebrate what pupils can do very well. Staff provide immediate verbal feedback and adapt questioning skilfully to pupils' communication modes. Ongoing assessment is evident through recapping and linking learning to previous understanding. Teachers adjust tasks and explanations appropriately following ongoing observation.

The school has trialled several assessment tools and teaching approaches, selecting those most appropriate for pupils. These tools are becoming increasingly well embedded and are helping to standardise practice across phases.

The curriculum is broad, ambitious and aligned with Curriculum for Wales. Pupils benefit from learning rooted in communication, well-being, independence and authentic real-world contexts. Staff plan effectively for skill progression, and learning outside the classroom is a particular strength that enhances pupils' independence and life skills.

Spotlight: Pupils who lead, connect and contribute beyond the classroom

Pupil voice is a significant strength of the school, with pupils taking active roles in decision-making through well-established committees and leadership opportunities. They influence the curriculum, shape the school environment and contribute to staff appointments, as well as representing the school confidently in local and national forums. Through roles such as the school council, sports ambassadors, the eco committee and Criw Cymraeg, pupils gather and present the views of their peers, developing strong communication, leadership, teamwork and citizenship skills.

These leadership experiences are complemented by the school's deep connections with its community. Intergenerational projects, partnerships with local charities and regular visits to residential homes enrich pupils' learning and strengthen their sense of belonging. Activities such as *Sing and Smile*, community storytelling, bilingual events and reading sessions help pupils build confidence, empathy and cultural identity while reinforcing literacy and well-being. Together, these opportunities enable pupils to influence their school and contribute meaningfully to their wider community.

Broad, meaningful skill progression that transforms pupils' engagement

Pupils make steady and purposeful progress across a wide range of skills, appropriate to their individual needs. They develop early reading, writing and communication skills well, with many becoming increasingly confident readers and communicators who use a variety of methods effectively. Pupils apply their literacy, numeracy and digital skills in meaningful, real-life contexts, such as creating posters, interpreting simple data, using tablets to make choices and contributing to multimedia projects.

Their physical development is supported through a rich programme of onsite and offsite activities that helps pupils build strength, resilience and confidence. Social skills represent a significant strength, with pupils interacting positively, collaborating well and communicating confidently with peers and adults. Creative skills also flourish, with pupils expressing themselves through art, music and performance, alongside an increasing use of multimedia to showcase and develop their ideas, such as pupil videos on "how to wash your hands", "game of Goffa" and "Dennis the school dog's visit to London" [Ysgol Heol Goffa - YouTube](#)

Spotlight: Rich real-world and physical experiences that build independence, confidence and resilience

A particular strength is the provision for learning outside the classroom and providing pupils with real-life experiences that support the development of key life skills.

Pupils are provided with a wide range of physical activities both onsite and offsite including, therapeutic use of the trampoline, cycling, walking, football, boccia and canoeing. As a result, pupils' physical skills develop appropriately. Older pupils demonstrate very effective physical skills, as well as showing resilience and courage during, for example, Duke of Edinburgh activities at bronze, silver and gold levels. Further, pupils build on these physical skills through a range of highly valuable and broad curriculum experiences. For example, through skiing trips locally and abroad. In a very few cases pupils showcase these skills by representing Wales in the special Olympics.

Pupils also build valuable life skills, developing independence through household tasks, community visits and accredited learning experiences. Overall, pupils progress well across key skill areas and engage confidently in a broad and enriching curriculum.

Leaders undertake extensive monitoring activities to review provision and pupils' experiences. They analyse evidence systematically to identify strengths and inform improvement priorities. Although monitoring is thorough, it does not always focus sharply enough on the progress pupils make over time. This limits the precision of evaluation, nevertheless, leaders identify clear priorities that align appropriately with their findings.

Middle leaders are developing confidence and play an increasing role in shaping provision across areas of learning. The school promotes a strong culture of professional learning, with staff engaging in regional and national networks. These opportunities are beginning to have a positive impact on pedagogy and pupils' progress, particularly in early reading, sensory engagement and communication.

Accommodation shortcomings restrict pupils' access, independence and progress

The growing pupil population has placed increasing pressure on the school's accommodation, which is no longer fit for purpose in several key areas. Many classrooms are too small and restrict pupils' movement, limiting access to learning particularly for wheelchair users. Access to the senior block is unsuitable for some pupils, who must leave the school perimeter to re-enter, reducing learning time and undermining inclusion.

Facilities intended to support independent living are outdated and poorly equipped, offering limited opportunities for pupils to develop essential life skills. In addition, the absence of dedicated rebound and hydrotherapy spaces restricts access to important

therapeutic provision. Collectively, these shortcomings have a negative impact on pupils' well-being, independence and curriculum.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils give cause for concern.

A site management concern was raised during the inspection, and the local authority has been notified.

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/carers 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)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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Publication date: 29/01/2026