

A report on
Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones

**Pentrefelin
Amlwch
Anglesey
LL68 9TH**

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 Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones

Name of provider	Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones
Local authority	Isle of Anglesey County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	Bilingual
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	-
Number of pupils on roll	537
Pupils of statutory school age	473
Number in the sixth form	64
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 secondary sector is 20.3%)</i>	16.3%
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 9.0%)</i>	14.8%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	45.5%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Lead partner for Initial Teacher Education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2025

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November 2025

Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/10/2018
Start date of inspection	10/11/2025

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

Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones is a warm and caring community. Comprehensive well-being provision is available to pupils, including 'Grisiau 6', which provides a range of effective interventions. There are robust safeguarding arrangements in place and pupils feel safe. Strong links with external agencies add to the quality of welfare provision. Effective transition arrangements from primary to secondary support pupils to feel at home quickly. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is robust and sensitive. The ALN team identifies pupils' needs promptly and uses a comprehensive range of data to inform effective interventions to support pupils.

Most pupils demonstrate polite and respectful behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils recall previous learning appropriately and develop their subject knowledge consistently. A very few pupils make very strong progress, often due to teachers' high expectations and their conscientious attitudes towards work. Sixth-form pupils are mature, eloquent and contribute beneficially to school life. During the last three years, pupils who are eligible for free school meals have achieved lower results at the end of Year 11 than their peers in similar schools.

There is a clear vision for Curriculum for Wales and the curriculum is broad, including vocational opportunities that are suitable for the local area. The school offers a variety of extra-curricular activities that enrich pupils' experiences and promote their well-being and personal development. Most teachers foster a constructive working relationship with pupils and give clear instructions. Many teachers model language well and introduce vocabulary and subject terminology in Welsh and English. In general, they plan suitable activities that build gradually to support pupils' progress. Many ask appropriate questions and adjust the pace of lessons to suit the pace of pupils' learning. In the few best cases, teaching is lively with high expectations, deeper questioning and effective use of bilingualism. These teachers plan a series of challenging lessons, explain concepts clearly and use relevant examples to help pupils make links. As a result, pupils apply their knowledge to new contexts confidently. However, in a few lessons, expectations are not high enough and activities are too simple, limiting pupils' progress. Differentiation and questioning are not effective enough to challenge the range of ability. Throughout, there is a lack of consistent opportunities across the curriculum to develop pupils' higher-order reading skills, particularly in Welsh.

The headteacher and senior leadership team share an agreed vision and work together closely. Comprehensive self-evaluation processes are in place, by using a range of evidence to inform improvement. Purposeful professional learning opportunities are available to staff and governors provide suitable challenge and support the school

effectively. However, there is variation in the effectiveness of middle leaders and they do not always evaluate the effect of provision on pupils' standards in sufficient detail.

The school has acted proactively to improve pupils' attendance. There are suitable monitoring and accountability processes, which enables leaders to analyse attendance patterns appropriately. However, pupils' attendance at the school is in need of further improvement.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Improve attendance.
- R2 Address the specific areas for improvement in teaching identified in the report.
- R3 Strengthen provision for developing pupils' literacy skills, particularly their higher-order reading skills.
- R4 Ensure that middle leaders evaluate the quality of provision according to its effect in order to identify to exact areas that are in need of improvement.

What happens next

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

Main findings

Teaching and learning

Most pupils at Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones behave politely and respectfully when greeting each other, the school's staff and visitors. They arrive at their lessons punctually, listen attentively to the teacher and their peers and undertake their tasks willingly. In general, many pupils' attitudes to learning are good. When they are given an opportunity to do so, a majority of pupils work together productively in pairs or group and discuss appropriately. Many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make the expected progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding. They are able to recall previous learning appropriately and, as a result, they develop their subject knowledge increasingly. A very few pupils make very strong progress. Often, this is as a result of the teacher's high expectations and the conscientious attitudes of these pupils towards their work.

Most teachers foster a constructive and supportive working relationship with the pupils in their care. They have sound subject knowledge and guide learning suitably by giving pupils clear instructions. Many teachers are good language models who introduce vocabulary and subject terminology purposefully in Welsh and English when presenting and explaining the content of the lesson. On the whole, they plan suitable activities that build gradually to support pupils to make progress. Many teachers ask appropriate questions to test pupils' recall and offer them suitable guidance as they move around the class. They also adjust the pace of the lesson so that it matches the pace of pupils' learning.

In the few cases where teaching is at its strongest, teachers have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They are extremely enthusiastic about their subject and present their lessons energetically. These teachers plan a series of lessons skilfully to challenge pupils to achieve to the best of their ability. They ask questions skilfully to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding and develop their oral skills. They succeed in explaining concepts very effectively by selecting examples that help pupils to make links with what they have already learned. As a result, pupils apply their knowledge and understanding confidently to new contexts. A few teachers are very skilful at teaching bilingually, correcting and encouraging pupils to develop their Welsh language skills sensitively and effectively.

In lessons where a teaching assistant supports pupils, there is effective co-operation between staff to support the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. However, in general, teachers do not always differentiate teaching effectively enough to meet the needs of pupils across the range of ability, particularly the most able pupils.

In a few cases, teaching is not effective enough, meaning that pupils make more limited progress. In these cases, the teacher's expectations are not high enough and they tend to allow pupils to be passive or achieve less than they could. Activities are not planned effectively enough, meaning that they are fragmented or keep pupils busy rather than developing learning. Often, these teachers only asked closed questions and, as a result, there are no opportunities for pupils to explain their answers fully and think more deeply. A few teachers miss opportunities to reinforce pupils' vocabulary and encourage them to develop their Welsh language skills.

In general, the quality of teachers' written comments and their effect on pupils' progress varies. In the best examples, the teacher's specific and clear comments support pupils to deepen their understanding, improve the quality of their work and improve their expression. In these cases, pupils make strong progress. Where feedback is less effective, it is often superficial or too complimentary.

Literacy skills

Many pupils listen attentively to their teachers' presentations and the contributions of their peers in lessons. They give appropriate answers to their teachers' questions and make purposeful contributions when discussing their work. They use vocabulary and subject terminology suitably in Welsh and English. A few pupils make eloquent extended contributions and present their ideas and explanations effectively. However, a minority of pupils give short, undeveloped answers to their teachers' questions and a few are reluctant to contribute to discussion work. When given the freedom to speak independently within pairs or groups, many pupils turn to English, even in those lessons where they are expected to contribute through the medium of Welsh. As a result, they miss valuable opportunities to practise their linguistic skills.

Most pupils who learn Welsh as a second language have a positive attitude towards the language. Many of them listen carefully and understand the language well. They pronounce words and phrases clearly and a minority respond confidently by giving extended answers. However, a few pupils lack the confidence to speak Welsh.

In general, provision to develop pupils' reading skills is appropriate. There are beneficial opportunities for them to develop their basic reading skills in subjects across the curriculum. As a result, many pupils locate information confidently and succeed in identifying and explaining quotations to support their points. Many also summarise the main points of individual texts effectively, for example as they summarise the beliefs and teachings of Christians on how to treat others in their religion, values and ethics lessons. In Welsh and English lessons, there are beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop some of their higher-order reading skills. A few pupils identify the features of language and literary techniques effectively, explaining their effect on the audience proficiently. For example,

they analyse how the author succeeds in attracting people to the ‘Seren Arian’ company tour to commemorate the centenary of Hedd Wyn’s death. These pupils also identify the implied meaning in text effectively when discussing various sources. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to practise their higher-order reading skills across the subjects of the curriculum.

The school is beginning to develop a culture of reading. For example, the Welsh and English departments allocate lessons to encourage the school’s younger pupils to read for pleasure. There is also valuable support for younger pupils with weak reading skills through ‘buddy’ reading sessions, where Year 10 pupils encourage and support their younger partners to develop their skills.

There are beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum and in their language lessons. As a result, many pupils write appropriate extended pieces in Welsh and English. They succeed in using subject terminology and organise their work, using paragraphs suitably. A few pupils write very effectively and express themselves sophisticatedly. These pupils have a wide vocabulary and succeed in using their imagination creatively, for example when they devise a recipe for Gwydion to create Blodeuwedd in their Welsh lessons. However, a minority of pupils make basic spelling and grammatical errors in Welsh and English and a few use English words or slang when presenting their work in Welsh. A few pupils have difficulty organising their work.

Numeracy skills

In their mathematics lessons and across the curriculum, there is an appropriate range of opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills. These opportunities enrich learning within the relevant subjects and offer pupils a suitable level of challenge in most cases. A majority of pupils have appropriate numeracy skills. They have a sound grasp of elementary number concepts, including the four rules and calculations with percentages. For example, in their mathematics lessons, they are able to calculate how much tax a person will have to pay at different salary levels. In their technology lessons, they are able to use information about different foods to work out the effect of diet on a person’s health.

A majority of pupils demonstrate an appropriate understanding of concepts relating to shape and measurement. For example, they are able to apply their understanding of re-arranging formulae and trigonometry to solve a variety of problems set in a real-life context. Many pupils display and analyse data successfully in situations across the curriculum. For example, they plot a graph of the resistance of a wire against its length, using the graph to identify a relationship between the variables and externals in their experiment. They show a good understanding of hypothesis when deciding how to collect data for an investigation.

A minority of pupils have weak numeracy skills. They do not have a sound enough grasp of elementary number concepts and this limits their progress when solving more complex numerical problems. Leaders in mathematics and numeracy recognise this and have prioritised improving specific aspects of the curriculum sensibly and running a programme of interventions to address this aspect.

Digital skills

Pupils develop their digital skills effectively in information technology lessons. For example, they benefit from opportunities to develop their coding skills, use spreadsheets and present information. On the whole, pupils develop their digital skills appropriately across the curriculum. In science lessons, many are given beneficial opportunities to program a ‘microbit’ to calculate steps and their effect on the heart. In technology lessons, many pupils use their digital skills effectively to design a product and, in music lessons, many pupils use software creatively to create hip-hop and rap music.

Other skills

Pupils develop their creative skills beneficially. For example, when designing a new logo for the school, many Year 8 pupils discuss the effectiveness of their work in response to the designs of the artist Coco Davez and when discussing the branding of a local company. Many pupils develop their physical skills well when practising their ball passing skills and adapt their passing effectively to suit different distances and speeds. Older pupils develop their thinking skills well when identifying hazards and risks in the world of construction, understanding the difference between the two, and also considering the seriousness when creating a risk assessment.

Curriculum

The school has a clear vision to realise Curriculum for Wales. The vision is based on providing a curriculum that nurtures confident, creative, successful and respectful learners. Emphasis is also placed on giving everyone equal opportunities, including pupils with ALN and those affected by poverty. Pupils with ALN benefit from personalised and flexible curricular provision. They receive beneficial support to meet their needs and to achieve a variety of experiences and successes, for example Agored Cymru qualifications, life skills and first aid. Although the school identifies more able and talented pupils, there is no structured provision for them.

Effective co-operation with other institutions on the island ensures a balanced and broad curriculum that meets pupils’ needs well. The range of subjects in Year 10 and 11 is comprehensive, including general and vocational subjects such as hair and beauty, vehicle technology and engineering design. The partnership with the Anglesey Post-16

Consortium ensures a wide selection of post-16 options, including vocational subjects such as mechanical engineering and medical science.

The health and well-being programme for Years 7, 8 and 9 provides valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about important themes such as mental health and online safety. Spiritual and moral themes, such as diversity, equality and citizenship, are integrated effectively across the curriculum. This includes age-appropriate sex and relationships education, which contributes significantly to a culture of safeguarding and respect. External providers and experts come to the school regularly to enrich provision, for example to provide sessions on sexual violence in the home. Although there are a few suitable opportunities for Year 11 and sixth-form pupils to hear about important current affairs, there are not consistent enough arrangements for them.

There are valuable arrangements in terms of transitioning from primary to secondary. The weekly 'Clwb Croeso' in the Autumn term, where Year 6 pupils visit the school and undertake activities within the areas of learning and experience, prepares them well for transferring to the secondary school.

There are a variety of valuable extra-curricular opportunities to expand pupils' experiences, which contribute significantly to their well-being and personal development, for example the basketball clubs, girls' football clubs, the kindness club and 'Clwb yr Afon Goch', which promotes Welshness. Purposeful cooking lessons for the sixth form prepare them well for an independent life after leaving school. The school also provides valuable educational visits for pupils, including trips abroad such as the skiing trip and visits closer to home to promote their awareness of careers, local industry and their identity, for example to RAF Valley, Wylfa and the annual St David's Day parade in Amlwch.

Sixth form

Sixth-form pupils are mature and are able to express themselves eloquently in both Welsh and English. They have good attitudes to learning. They contribute confidently orally in the classroom and when asking their own questions. They recall previous knowledge well and apply this appropriately to new situations. They acquire new knowledge quickly. They take advantage of opportunities for them to develop their leadership skills and support their personal development by leading the school council and eco council, charity activities and through sports leadership courses.

Well-being, care, support and guidance

The school is a warm, homely and caring community where pupils and staff work together very effectively to support pupils. Staff know their pupils very well and provide comprehensive well-being support that meets individual needs in a sensitive and timely manner. The 'Grisiau 6' provision, which is the school's well-being provision, is a notable

example of this. It provides a range of effective interventions, such as emotional well-being sessions, art therapy and the 'Tangnerefedd' room, which contribute to a strong feeling among pupils of being safe and happy. The 'well-being button' on the school website is available for all pupils to share concerns and a prompt response is received from staff. Strong and meaningful links with external agencies, such as the Hwb youth workers, counsellors and the local police, add significantly to the quality of well-being provision.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are monitored effectively by pastoral leaders. The teachers' consistency in following the discipline support steps allow pastoral leaders to analyse behaviour patterns strategically, by intervening quickly and appropriately to support learners. Purposeful co-operation between pastoral leaders and Grisiau 6 is a notable strength. As a result, pupils receive comprehensive provision that promotes positive behaviour and attitudes to learning. The school's younger pupils take pride in their positive behaviour points and the school has developed a competitive ethos among pupils, where good behaviour is expected.

The school has an effective council where pupils are given opportunities to develop leadership skills and take on responsibilities that have a positive influence on the life and work of the school. The school council's sub-committees develop leadership skills further and provide opportunities for council members to focus on areas of personal interest, for example the eco committee which has improved the school's environment. The council has implemented valuable changes by improving the toilets, updating the uniform policy to allow pupils to wear shorts throughout the year, and installing new football and basketball goals. As a result, pupils feel that the school considers their opinions and acts on their ideas.

Under the clear leadership of the ALN team, the school provides suitable and effective support for pupils with additional learning needs. There are appropriate procedures in place to identify pupils' needs promptly and the team gathers and analyses a comprehensive range of relevant information. The school uses data on literacy, numeracy and emotional well-being to inform the most suitable interventions. Thorough tracking and monitoring arrangements ensure that pupils' progress is reviewed regularly from their starting points, enabling them to adapt support as necessary. Individual development plans and one-page profiles provide detailed information and specific targets for pupils with ALN. All staff have access to a useful summary of this information to inform their planning. Suitable guidance is available on a wide range of specific needs, which supports staff to understand and meet individual needs when teaching. Appropriate training for teachers and assistants supports the development of teaching strategies for pupils with ALN. However, staff do not always use these strategies to support pupils consistently in lessons.

The school is aware of the challenges of absence and has strengthened practices to improve pupils' attendance. Recently, the school has begun to implement a strategic graduated response system with clear roles and actions for everyone involved in supporting attendance. During the last academic year, the attendance rate fell and was lower than what is seen in other similar schools. However, unverified data from the school for the first half-term of 2025-2026 shows that the school's attendance rates have increased significantly compared to the same period last year.

There are robust arrangements in place to safeguard pupils and staff across the school understand them well. Staff understand how to respond to concerns, ensuring that potential issues are followed-up appropriately. As a result, many pupils feel safe and most state that they are free from bullying and are confident about what to do if they have concerns. Purposeful and regular safeguarding training is provided to all members of staff and governors, reinforcing their understanding of statutory policies and procedures. Leaders work closely and effectively with a range of external agencies, which contributes significantly to ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils. Detailed electronic records are kept of any concern relating to pupils, which enables leaders to create a clear picture of individual needs and the wider context of any situation. The school also acts proactively to support pupils' understanding of how to stay safe, through activities such as well-being sessions during registration periods, assemblies and in subjects across the curriculum.

Leading and improving

The headteacher is a thoughtful and energetic leader. He is supported strongly by the remainder of the senior leadership team. They work closely together and share an agreed vision to offer the best possible experiences to pupils, whatever their background. This vision has been shared successfully with the whole school community.

The roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team are allocated fairly and take advantage of the individual members' strengths. Leadership has had a positive effect on well-being provision, pupil safeguarding arrangements and the quality of teaching in many cases. Support for staff well-being following a very difficult period of the past few months is a notable strength. The headteacher and senior leadership team have succeeded in maintaining staff morale and in supporting them effectively through a sad period.

The school has comprehensive self-evaluation processes that use a variety of methods to gather evidence. These include interviews with pupils, scrutiny of books, lesson observations and appropriate use of data to raise questions about the quality of provision. The school is part of 'Cynghrair Môn', which is a partnership of the secondary schools on the island. This arrangement helps to strengthen and support their practices in this area and validate the findings from the self-evaluation processes. Through these activities, the

senior leadership team has a good understanding of the main strengths and areas for improvement.

Line management arrangements are appropriate. Regular meetings are held with agreed agendas and middle leaders value the significant support and professional challenge they receive from those who lead them. Middle leaders are enthusiastic about their areas of responsibility. However, there is too much variation in their effectiveness. In the minority of the best cases, they have a detailed understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in their areas of responsibility. However, not all middle leaders consider the effect of provision on pupils' standards and progress sufficiently. As a result, they do not identify the exact elements of pupils' standards that need to be improved and, therefore, improvement planning is not incisive enough.

There is a close link between self-evaluation processes, improvement planning and professional development reviews. Staff value the provision and support that is available through the wide range of professional learning experiences the school provides for all staff. A strong feature of this offer is the purposeful opportunities for teachers to develop aspects of teaching and the training for leaders to develop their motivation skills. The school's professional learning offer is beginning to have a positive effect on aspects such as developing aspects of skills and middle leadership.

Leaders give suitable attention to national priorities. There is an appropriate focus on supporting the development of pupils' oral Welsh skills and there is effective provision for pupils with additional learning needs. However, the school's work to improve attendance rates has not been effective enough.

Leaders place suitable focus on reducing the effect of poverty on pupils' attainment. This aligns closely with the school's vision to provide the best possible opportunities for all pupils, whatever their background. The pupil development grant is used purposefully to support vulnerable pupils and the school evaluates the effect of this expenditure appropriately. Leaders track the progress of vulnerable pupils closely and offer mentoring, well-being support and academic interventions as necessary. The school provides support to ensure that pupils who are affected by poverty can engage fully with the extra-curricular opportunities provided by the school, including musical instrument lessons and local and international trips. However, over the past three years, the performance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals in their qualifications at the end of Year 11 is generally lower than their peers in similar schools.

Governors share the vision of the senior leadership team and undertake their duties as a critical friend enthusiastically. There is a strong sense of co-operation with the school's leaders and they provide suitable challenge.

The school seeks the views of parents regularly, by using the findings appropriately in its self-evaluation processes. Leaders communicate with parents regularly through a variety of ways such as effective use of social media and the revival of the school's newsletter, 'Y Leinws Newydd'.

Additional information

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

The school's arrangements for site management 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 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>)

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

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