

**A report on**  
**Ysgol Santes Helen**

**Twtil**  
**Caernarfon**  
**Gwynedd**  
**LL55 1PF**

**Date of inspection: January 2026**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh**

## About Ysgol Santes Helen

Name of provider	Ysgol Santes Helen
Local authority	Gwynedd Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	Catholic
Number of pupils on roll	40
Pupils of statutory school age	32
Number in nursery classes	*
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 the primary sector is 22.9%)	27.4%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 11.1%)	31.3%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	43.8%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2004

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	08/10/2018
Start date of inspection	26/01/2026

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

Ysgol Santes Helen is an inclusive and caring school in which pupils' wellbeing is central to its daily work. The school's ethos, under the motto 'Câr dy gymydog (Love thy neighbour)', fosters a respectful and supportive environment, and staff provide strong care for pupils and their families. However, many pupils, including those from low-income households, do not make enough progress in their skills over time. In addition, leaders do not identify or address the shortcomings in the standard of teaching in many lessons.

Teachers provide a few appropriate activities that link to termly themes and are enriched by local visits. Many pupils' reading and mathematics skills develop suitably. However, teachers do not plan the curriculum coherently or comprehensively enough to ensure that many pupils make full progress in their writing, numeracy and digital skills over time. In addition, many of the learning activities do not engage pupils' interest successfully enough.

Staff promote the Welsh language by modelling language suitably. However, most pupils do not make robust use of the language when working and socialising with each other. Recently, staff have focused on building pupils' independence, but the level of challenge and the pace of many lessons do not respond to the needs of all pupils, particularly those with additional learning needs and those of higher ability.

The headteacher leads with strong commitment, and governors are supportive. However, leaders do not plan strategically enough to lead the necessary improvements. The outcomes of the self-evaluation processes are not reliable enough to identify the most important aspects for improvement, including the quality of teaching, pupils' skills, and developing a stimulating and comprehensive curriculum.

## Recommendations

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

- R1 Respond to the safeguarding concern that was raised during the inspection
- R2 Improve leaders' effectiveness, especially in terms of self-evaluation and planning for improvement.
- R3 Ensure the necessary improvements to the curriculum and teaching
- R4 Provide regular opportunities for pupils to develop and apply the full range of skills

## What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are needed in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan which sets out how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will usually monitor the school's progress every four to six months.

## Main evaluation

Ysgol Santes Helen is a caring and inclusive community that promotes pupils' wellbeing effectively. The motto, 'Câr dy gymydog', permeates through all aspects of the school's life and work. Teachers foster close and supportive working relationships with pupils, and the strong sense of respect between staff and pupils is a prominent feature of the provision. Strong emphasis is placed on pupils' spiritual, moral and social development through purposeful opportunities to reflect on values such as empathy and kindness. Staff provide beneficial care and support to pupils and their families. However, there are shortcomings in many lessons and many pupils, including those from low-income households, do not make enough progress in their skills over time. In addition, leaders do not address important issues that need improvement.

Teachers plan a few appropriate learning activities that link purposefully with the termly themes. They offer beneficial opportunities for pupils to go on local visits which support them to deepen their knowledge and understanding of what they learn. However, teachers do not plan the curriculum coherently or comprehensively enough to develop all pupils' skills and engage and maintain their interest effectively.

Staff are appropriate language models and encourage pupils to use their Welsh skills when working within their learning areas and when playing together. However, most pupils do not make robust enough use of the language. The reading skills of the majority of pupils in Welsh and English develop strongly. The older pupils are enthusiastic when discussing the topics within their books and read aloud confidently. Across the school, the mathematics skills of the majority of pupils develop suitably. However, many pupils do not make enough progress in developing a range of skills from their starting points, including their writing and digital skills. In addition, opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in their work across the curriculum are limited.

Recently, staff have worked purposefully to improve pupils' independent skills, including offering them appropriate opportunities to work on their own and in small groups. A minority of pupils complete their learning activities confidently and know the steps to take if they face difficulties. Teachers support pupils to understand what they need to do in order to complete their work appropriately. In a few sessions, they offer useful feedback to pupils, which allows them to know the next steps in their learning. However, teachers' expectations of pupils' attainment within many lessons are not high enough.

Leaders identify pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) at an early stage and work effectively with those pupils and other agencies to respond to their needs appropriately. Teachers make purposeful use of assistants to provide suitable support for pupils to develop their literacy skills, and staff provide a range of purposeful interventions that

support pupils to make progress against their individual targets. However, the level of challenge within many of the learning activities does not respond to the needs of all pupils, particularly those with ALN and those of higher ability. In addition, the pace of lessons does not support pupils to immerse themselves and make progress in their learning.

Pupils, including members of the school council, take pride in the opportunities they have to contribute to some aspects of the school's life and work, for example by taking part in the arrangements for the summer party. However, there are few opportunities for them to influence the school's wider provision.

The headteacher is a dedicated leader who demonstrates a strong commitment to the school and its community, and a supportive and caring environment permeates through school life. Governors are supportive and engage with the school's work regularly through visits and discussions. They monitor important aspects such as pupils' attendance, safeguarding and the budget appropriately. However, the governing body does not have a robust enough understanding of the most important areas for improvement in terms of the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment.

The headteacher undertakes appropriate self-evaluation activities, including scrutinising pupils' work and conducting learning walks. However, leaders' findings that derive from these activities are not reliable enough, nor do they pay enough attention to important aspects of teaching and learning. As a result, leaders do not identify the most important aspects of provision and standards that need attention. In addition, leaders have not developed a purposeful and stimulating curriculum to meet pupils' needs and develop their skills successfully.

Leaders manage staff's performance but individual staff targets do not derive clearly enough from a systematic evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning or teachers' specific developmental needs. As a result, leaders do not identify professional learning opportunities strategically enough to address key weaknesses.

### **Additional information**

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are a cause for concern.

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

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

Although leaders and governors manage the school's funding appropriately, they do not monitor the expenditure of the pupil development grant thoroughly enough.

## 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.

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**This document has been translated by Trosol (Welsh to English).**

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