

A report on

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Y Castell

**Crescent Road
Caerphilly
CF83 1WH**

Date of inspection: February 2026

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Y Castell

Name of provider	Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Y Castell
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	419
Pupils of statutory school age	296
Number in nursery classes	75
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%)	14.4%
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%)	11.8%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	4.1%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Lead partner in Initial teacher education	Yes
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2023

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	03/10/2016
Start date of inspection	23/02/2026

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

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

Summary

Ysgol Gymraeg y Castell is a warm and welcoming community where pupils' wellbeing and progress is central to its work. Leaders provide a clear direction for the school, with a strong emphasis on nurturing independent and confident pupils who take pride in their Welshness and identity. The headteacher is supported effectively by a dedicated team of staff and governors who work together closely in the interests of pupils' wellbeing and learning.

Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs and those from low-income households, make sound progress in their skills. Staff use successful arrangements to identify and support pupils in a timely manner. Close cooperation with families and specialist agencies contributes positively to their learning.

Staff create an environment where respect, kindness and cooperation are prominent features. Most pupils show positive attitudes to their learning, work together productively and persevere in the face of challenge. Almost all develop sound oral skills. They contribute to class discussions purposefully and converse with their friends naturally during less formal periods. Pupils enjoy reading, and recent actions have strengthened their interest in Welsh books. Pupils' writing skills develop strongly, although there are few opportunities for them to write at length. Pupils' standards of mathematics are strong and they apply their numeracy skills confidently in various learning contexts. Their digital skills develop consistently.

Leaders have led staff skilfully to plan a curriculum that is relevant and stimulating to pupils, including experiences that connect pupils with their local area and its rich heritage. Staff's professional learning is a clear strength in the school which, in turn, contributes positively to the quality of teaching. In the practices where teaching is strongest, teachers ensure a purposeful pace to the sessions and a suitable challenge that supports pupils to make good progress. Staff's effective questioning methods extend pupils' understanding and independence successfully. They offer timely feedback and regular opportunities for pupils to improve their work. However, these practices are not consistent across the school.

Leaders foster a culture of trust and cooperation in which staff take active responsibility to strengthen provision over time.

The school considers parents' opinions and suggestions carefully and shares clear information about their children's progress through regular communication. This helps parents understand their child's strengths and the next steps in their learning, and strengthens the partnership between the home and school.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Ensure that effective teaching practices are consistent across the school
- R2 Extend opportunities for pupils to write at length

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Ysgol Gymraeg y Castell is a happy, caring and inclusive community. The headteacher is a dedicated leader who shares his vision clearly to prepare pupils for the next steps in their learning and the wider world. He shares the vision successfully with all staff and nurtures pupils to be independent and skilful learners who are proud of their identity and language. He is supported by a conscientious deputy and staff who create a sense of a harmonious community. Robust cooperation between the staff is a strong feature with everyone willing to share their effective practice and to support each other. Leaders allocate roles and responsibilities to staff sensibly in order to meet pupils' needs and promote improvement in provision. The headteacher ensures that the leadership team has the skills and knowledge to undertake their duties effectively.

The headteacher has fostered a climate and culture of trust to enable staff to take responsibility for their own professional learning. The arrangements and approach of all staff towards professional learning and professional research are central to the school's procedures. Each member of staff has an active voice in the direction of their individual learning journey. Their partnership with Cardiff Metropolitan University means that staff are responsible for mentoring students regularly. This helps to strengthen the positive attitude of all staff towards professional learning and they benefit from the latest research through the university.

Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to make choices and decisions about their learning in the indoor and outdoor learning environment from an early age. Most pupils work together successfully and support each other to overcome difficulties and persevere effectively. They show empathy for each other instinctively within the inclusive provision. They demonstrate strong independent learning skills when working on tasks and deciding on the most effective approach to undertake their work.

In the practices where teaching is at its best, teachers ensure a purposeful pace to the learning sessions and staff set a suitable challenge which supports pupils to make good progress. They use effective questioning methods which extend pupils' understanding and independence successfully. Teachers provide engaging and interesting learning tasks which spark and maintain most pupils' interest, providing them with purposeful opportunities to develop literacy, numeracy, digital and creative skills beneficially. They provide timely oral and written feedback, providing regular opportunities for pupils to improve their work. However, these practices are not consistent across the school.

Leaders have worked diligently with pupils, staff, governors, parents and the community to deliver 'Cwricwlwm y Castell'. Teachers plan the provision carefully and flexibly in order to deliver an interesting and relevant curriculum for pupils. They succeed in developing pupils' understanding of their local area and the wider world skilfully, for example by embracing the heritage of Caerphilly Castle and its influence on their local area. Staff meet regularly to evaluate specific aspects of the curriculum and adapt it purposefully in order to keep it up-to-date so that it continues to stimulate pupils' interest.

Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those from low-income households, make sound progress in their skills. Almost all pupils develop sound oral skills during their time at the school. They express their opinions, converse naturally with each other and contribute to class discussions with increasing confidence. Many pupils develop effective reading skills. They are enthusiastic readers in English and discuss texts and authors confidently. Recently, staff have put plans in place that are beginning to foster the same enthusiasm in Welsh. Across the school, pupils write purposefully for a variety of purposes. Under the teachers' careful guidance, pupils make sound progress in their writing skills. However, teachers do not provide enough regular opportunities for pupils to write at length.

Teachers support pupils successfully to make consistent progress in their mathematics skills. Most pupils have a sound understanding of mathematics concepts and use them confidently in lessons. Opportunities to develop pupils' numeracy skills are planned skilfully by teachers and, as a result, pupils use their skills successfully in a variety of areas of learning. Most pupils' digital skills develop consistently as they move through the school. They use digital tools confidently to support and enrich their learning.

Teachers provide interesting experiences for pupils to develop positive attitudes to spiritual awareness and moral aspects, which affect their own lives and the lives of others. As a result, pupils show respect for themselves and their peers, and develop their awareness of different identities successfully.

The school identifies and supports pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) effectively and ensures timely and inclusive provision for pupils. By working with parents and external agencies, staff adapt the provision purposefully to support pupils' wellbeing and development successfully. Teachers monitor pupils' progress consistently and use the learning outcomes to tailor provision to meet their wellbeing and learning needs skilfully.

Governors have a thorough knowledge of the school's current context. They meet regularly to discuss strategic issues and visit staff in order to gain a better understanding

of specific aspects of the school's work. This equips members of the governing body to challenge and support leaders extremely effectively.

Leaders ensure that all staff and governors use a range of beneficial methods to evaluate the effect of the provision on pupils' wellbeing and learning. They include staff purposefully by scrutinising pupils' work and visiting classes regularly. As a result, leaders and staff have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and the key areas for development. Leaders and governors use this information effectively to plan improvement priorities sensibly.

One of the school's notable strengths is the way in which leaders listen to parents' opinions and suggestions and take them seriously when making decisions.

SPOTLIGHT: Responding to the parents' voice by sharing detailed and useful information about pupils' progress

In response to feedback from parents to request further information about their children's progress, the school shares relevant information about pupils' outcomes effectively through interim and annual reports that are accessible and easy to interpret. Teachers discuss pupils' current progress and progress over time with parents as well as the next steps in their learning. This beneficial communication enables staff to explain the information clearly and discuss how parents can support the learning further. The reports are detailed with teachers including links to useful resources so that families are able to use them at home. As a result, parents have a sound understanding of their child's development and progress. This has led to more consistent support at home, better motivation among pupils and stronger progress among most pupils over time.

Additional information

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are not 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.

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 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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Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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