

**A report on**  
**Ysgol Gyfun y Strade**

**Heol Sandy  
Llanelli  
Carmarthenshire  
SA15 4DL**

**Date of inspection: March 2026**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh**

## About Ysgol Gyfun y Strade

Name of provider	Ysgol Gyfun y Strade
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
School category according to Welsh-medium provision	
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	*
Number of pupils on roll	1253
Pupils of statutory school age	1071
Number in the sixth form	182
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year <i>average</i> <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the secondary sector is 20.3%)</i>	11.0%
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>	8.1%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	36.9%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Lead partner for Initial teacher education	No
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2017

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Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	22/03/2019
Start date of inspection	16/03/2026

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 Gyfun y Strade is a warm and supportive community where positive working relationships between staff and pupils are a basis for a productive learning environment. Most pupils behave respectfully and apply themselves enthusiastically to their learning, which enables many to make sound progress from their starting points. Most pupils feel safe and value the school's inclusive and familial ethos, which gives them a strong sense of belonging.

Many teachers plan learning effectively and provide activities that build logically on pupils' previous knowledge. In the strongest examples, teaching engages pupils' interest successfully, which develops their ability to think more deeply and encourages them to be more independent learners. In a few lessons where teaching is not as strong, teachers do not plan effectively enough to provide pupils with sufficient challenge.

The school places a strong emphasis on nurturing and developing pupils' skills. Leaders plan and co-ordinate purposeful and valuable provision to develop literacy, numeracy and digital competence skills, integrating them effectively to enrich learning across the curriculum. As a result, many pupils make sound progress by using their skills meaningfully and applying them confidently and skilfully across the subjects. The curriculum is broad and relevant and supports the development of pupils as well-rounded individuals.

Arrangements for well-being, care, support and guidance are strong. Staff know the pupils well and provide tailored support which responds sensitively to their needs. The 'Strade yn y Gymuned' initiative provides pupils with purposeful support which improves their well-being, engagement with learning and helps them to overcome obstacles relating to poverty and social and emotional difficulties. There is suitable provision for pupils with additional learning needs and safeguarding arrangements are sound.

There are valuable opportunities for pupils to contribute to school life and lead initiatives which develop their confidence and sense of belonging to the school's wider community. Sixth-form pupils broadcast Welsh language music and weekly well-being messages through the school's radio station, 'Sain y Sosban', by promoting the Welsh ethos and the community of Ysgol y Strade.

The headteacher is a reliable and robust leader with a clear vision. He is supported effectively by the leadership team and governors. The school has suitable arrangements to evaluate its work and plan for improvement, which has led to improvements in a number of areas, including improving the quality of teaching and provision for skills. However, over time, leaders have not succeeded in improving attendance, including the attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

## **Recommendations**

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

- R1 Improve pupils' attendance levels, including pupils who are eligible for free school meals
- R2 Share the strong teaching practices that were seen in the best lessons to strengthen the standard of teaching further

## **What happens next**

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare two case studies on its work in relation to planning for skills and the leadership role of pupils within the school, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

## Main findings

### Teaching and learning

There is a strong working relationship between staff and pupils at Ysgol Gyfun y Strade. An excellent feature is pupils' extremely positive attitudes towards the school and their learning, with most behaving respectfully towards their teachers, peers and visitors. Most pupils are punctual to lessons, follow instructions immediately and respond positively and purposefully to their teachers' oral feedback. They are happy at school and value their ambitious and homely learning community.

As a result of strong teaching, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make sound progress. In most cases, teachers are strong language models, use subject terminology confidently and reinforce vocabulary regularly throughout lessons. They ensure that pupils use the correct terminology in subsequent tasks when talking and writing. In many lessons, teachers plan purposefully. Tasks build appropriately on each other and focus clearly on what pupils are expected to learn. They direct learning effectively and provide appealing and stimulating resources. They explain concepts effectively. These teachers question pupils appropriately to recall and strengthen their learning. They circle the classroom regularly to monitor pupils' progress and provide timely assistance to support pupils to move forward with their learning. In most cases, this is done in a supportive and sensitive manner, in an environment where pupils feel safe to contribute ideas and make mistakes.

A few pupils make strong a swift progress as a result of highly effective teaching. In these cases, teachers:

- are enthusiastic, passionate about their subject and create a learning environment that promotes engagement and resilience among pupils
- model skilfully, sharing and discussing the features of work of high quality so that pupils develop their thinking skills and independence
- use specialist knowledge to plan skilfully for pupils' learning
- break the learning down into stages that increase gradually in challenge
- question skilfully and encourage pupils to explain and justify their responses and build on each other's ideas

In a few lessons, shortcomings in teaching limit pupils' progress. In these cases, planning is not effective enough and, as a result, tasks tend to be repetitive or are not challenging enough, or teachers over-direct with presentations that are too long.

Many teachers provide effective feedback which identifies clearly what pupils are doing well and what aspects they need to improve. In the best examples, teachers and pupils

make regular and effective use of success criteria. The 'Gorau Glas', 'Myfyrio Melyn', 'Cywiro Coch' assessment system is used effectively. As a result, most pupils respond purposefully to feedback to improve their work. Where feedback is less effective, it does not always provide specific enough advice on how to improve or does not respond adequately to subject misconceptions.

## **Skills**

Strategic work to develop all skills across the curriculum is a notable strength. Planning and co-ordination are extremely effective and ensure that provision is woven naturally throughout the curriculum. As a result, there is a clear and consistent effect on pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

## **Literacy**

There is a clear and robust vision for developing pupils' literacy skills. Leaders ensure that literacy is at the heart of the curriculum and there is effective co-operation between departments to develop literacy across the curriculum. As a result, literacy is integrated effectively across subjects, with a strong focus on developing pupils' reading, writing and communication skills.

Most pupils listen carefully to teachers and peers and many answer confidently when giving short answers. A majority of pupils express their ideas appropriately, by using relevant vocabulary and suitable subject terminology. A minority of pupils develop their answers more maturely by using rich vocabulary and clear explanations with natural syntax. A few pupils speak hesitantly when responding and do not always extend their answers.

Many pupils develop basic reading skills effectively by recalling and summarising information, for example by highlighting and annotating reading materials and poems purposefully in Welsh and English. They succeed in interpreting the meaning of these texts appropriately. A minority of pupils develop higher-order reading skills effectively by combining knowledge, interpretation and comparing sources. They evaluate issues effectively, such as the effect of racism, and form an opinion successfully when discussing 'Did Martin Luther King's dream come true?' in their religion, values and ethics lessons.

A majority of pupils write with a good level of accuracy in terms of grammar and spelling. They structure their work clearly and use terminology appropriately. Many express and justify their opinions effectively and take advantage of guidelines to make purposeful improvements to their work. A few pupils produce mature extended pieces of writing of a very high standard, for example when writing mature and meaningful speeches on the topic 'Are we doing enough to support girls who are denied education?' in their English

lessons. However, a minority of pupils make errors in mutation and spelling, with a few pupils making basic mistakes.

## **Numeracy**

The school provides a wide range of relevant opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills increasingly. Numeracy skills across the relevant subjects provide a high level of challenge and enable pupils to apply their skills in meaningful contexts. As a result, in mathematics and other relevant subjects, many pupils have sound numeracy skills.

Many pupils apply their number skills effectively and deal successfully with problems relating to money and time in their mathematics lessons. They measure angles correctly and calculate the area and volume of a variety of shapes confidently. Many pupils deal with algebraic expressions appropriately, for example when expanding brackets to solve equations. They plot and read coordinates appropriately in the four quadrants. These pupils gather, display and interpret data confidently by using tables, charts and a variety of graphs.

In suitable subjects across the curriculum, many pupils apply their numeracy skills skilfully. They interpret statistics successfully in contexts that are relevant to the subject. For example, they read population pyramids effectively to calculate, compare and interpret the information in their geography lessons. In their science lessons, they calculate gradient successfully from straight line graphs and write comprehensive conclusions when interpreting the information. Many pupils use their understanding of algebra appropriately when dealing with formulae to calculate compound measures, such as speed, accurately and when studying Newton's laws. In their technology lessons, many pupils apply their number skills beneficially in calculating the cost of producing an electronic circuit effectively as part of their mechanical design.

## **Digital**

Pupils make strong progress in their digital skills. Many develop a strong understanding of safety by discussing the dangers and reliability of online content, along with the advantages and disadvantages of artificial intelligence. Many use coding effectively as a tool to understand the importance of encryption and decryption. Many pupils use devices and a wide range of software confidently and creatively to solve problems. In their digital skills lessons, they apply these skills effectively, for example by producing a varied range of digital content such as websites, video clips, animations, GIFs in addition to using computer games to support their learning. As a result, pupils demonstrate strong skills in planning, creating and evaluating their digital content.

There are beneficial and purposeful opportunities to develop their skills further across the curriculum. In their technology lessons, many pupils use their digital skills effectively to

design products. In their drama lessons, there are valuable opportunities for pupils to create and perform a script for a news bulletin, in addition to editing and recording, and pupils create, produce and present the school's radio programme, 'Sain y Sosban'.

## **Curriculum**

The school has developed a clear vision for the curriculum which reflects the school's core values. The school promotes co-ordinated and inclusive learning, ensuring that pupils' progress is at the heart of the planning process. Leaders have mapped the skills purposefully and planned skilfully so that pupils are given opportunities to make meaningful progress. This has had a positive effect on provision and on pupils' progress. The school ensures a smooth transition to Year 7 by working purposefully with Year 6 teachers to ensure that they build on the reading, writing and number skills that have already been developed.

Curricular provision is broad and inclusive for Years 10 and 11, which includes a variety of qualifications. The school works successfully with local providers to expand the vocational offer, providing courses such as hair and beauty and construction. In the sixth form, the school provides a wide range of general and vocational courses by working with schools in the region to expand the opportunities and progression routes available through the medium of Welsh.

The school works with Careers Wales to ensure that all pupils have access to appropriate advice through individual interviews, groups sessions and targeted interventions for vulnerable pupils. There is suitable provision for these pupils, including a nurture class in Year 7 and an alternative programme for Year 10 and 11 pupils. The school works closely with the youth service to co-ordinate practical and appealing activities. This has strengthened the attendance, confidence and basic skills of these pupils to prepare them for life and work.

The health and well-being curriculum supports the development of pupils' social and emotional skills effectively. There is a range of effective opportunities for pupils to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness. Provision includes sessions on how to manage stress and purposeful and age-appropriate lessons for relationships and sexuality education. Health and well-being lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 and contributions from external partners, such as charities and theatre in education, enrich pupils' experiences effectively. Although pupils in Years 10 to 13 benefit from morning well-being sessions and occasional well-being days, there are fewer structured opportunities to develop their knowledge of well-being as part of the curriculum.

The school promotes the Welsh ethos, Welsh history and culture effectively. There is a rich range of extra-curricular opportunities to expand pupils' experiences in the arts and

sports. These include the Eisteddfod, school shows, choirs, the school band ‘Y Goleuni’ and an opportunity to be part of fictitious court cases in Swansea law courts. There are also opportunities for pupils to develop their digital and creative skills by competing in various competitions. The school promotes equality and respect sensitively. For example, through history and religion, values and ethics lessons, pupils explore rights, values, equality and a variety of histories, including the experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people.

### **Sixth form**

Sixth-form pupils have a mature attitude to their work. Most take an interest in the subjects and show independence when working. They are able to explain their work clearly and make links with their previous learning effectively.

### **Well-being, care, support and guidance**

Ysgol y Strade is a homely, caring and supportive community where teachers know the pupils very well. The well-being team work together effectively and show a strong commitment to ensuring that pupils develop as happy and successful individuals. They provide a suitable range of tailored support that responds sensitively to pupils’ emotional and social needs. For example, pupils who attend ‘Hafan’ benefit from purposeful interventions which help them to feel safe and confident and support them to manage their emotions effectively. The school has strong partnerships with external agencies, which supports provision further and supports pupils to cope with everyday challenges.

### **Spotlight 1 – The ‘Strade yn y Gymuned’ initiative**

A valuable feature of the school’s work is the ‘Strade yn y Gymuned’ initiative. This initiative uses a wide range of data to identify individual pupils and provide purposeful support. As a result, it improves pupils’ well-being and engagement with their learning and supports them effectively to overcome obstacles associated with poverty and social and emotional difficulties. The school works with a large number of local services, organisations and businesses to target specific pupils with appropriate interventions. For example, pupils work with a local care home and develop their confidence by communicating and caring for the residents. Another programme is ‘Breaking Bread’, a joint project with a local organisation in Llanelli town centre. A group of pupils from low-income households learn cooking skills alongside people from the community. A significant improvement was seen in the attendance and attitudes to learning of this group of pupils.

Robust transition arrangements ensure that pupils settle successfully at the school and develop a strong sense of belonging. The school's staff gather and analyse a comprehensive range of relevant information which ensures early identification of these pupils. This ensures effective progression in pupils' well-being and progress.

A strong culture of safeguarding permeates all aspects of the school's work. Leaders promote well-being and safety as a clear priority and ensure that staff at all levels have appropriate training to identify and respond to concerns. There are robust processes in place to record and follow-up any instances promptly and effectively. The school takes proactive action to develop pupils' understanding of how to stay safe. The school works effectively with external agencies to strengthen provision and ensure effective support for pupils. As a result, most pupils feel safe and treat others with respect.

Provision for pupils with ALN is suitable. There are appropriate procedures in place to identify pupils' needs promptly and the team gathers and analyses a comprehensive range of relevant information. Individual development plans and support plans 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. Appropriate training for teachers and assistants supports the development of teaching strategies for pupils with ALN. The school uses data on literacy, numeracy and emotional and social well-being to inform the most suitable interventions. The ALN team offers a range of interventions in 'Hafan' to support pupils to develop their basic skills and works effectively with a range of external agencies. Rigorous tracking and monitoring arrangements ensure that the progress of pupils with ALN is reviewed regularly from their starting points, enabling the team to adapt support as necessary. These pupils benefit from opportunities to develop their practical skills, for example when working in the school garden. Provision in the Year 7 nurture class supports pupils with ALN to transfer effectively to the school.

Recently, the school has strengthened its arrangements to promote attendance by implementing suitable tracking and monitoring systems and analysing data in detail. Leaders use this information appropriately to identify trends and act promptly, where necessary. A suitable range of strategies are used to promote positive attendance and encourage pupils to attend school regularly. When attendance is a cause for concern, the school responds in a timely and gradual manner, using the support of the pastoral team and external agencies to provide suitable targeted support. This has led to an improvement in unverified attendance data this year. However, work to improve attendance has been less effective over time. Over the past three years, pupils' attendance, including pupils who are eligible for free school meals, has been lower than in similar schools.

Most pupils behave well and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. The school has a clear vision of promoting positive behaviour which is based on respect, and staff

implement these expectations consistently. This contributes to an orderly and supportive culture where cases of misbehaviour are relatively rare. Where necessary, the behaviour and well-being team uses an effective range of strategies and interventions to support behaviour. There are appropriate systems in place to acknowledge and encourage positive behaviour.

The school provides a wide range of valuable opportunities for pupils to play an active part in school life and develop their leadership skills. Pupils feel that their voice is valued and that the school responds appropriately to their opinions. The school council, 'Llais y Strade', and its sub-committees enable pupils to contribute meaningfully to decisions, and have a significant influence on important aspects of school life. For example, they respond to the needs of their fellow pupils by developing an electronic means of sharing concerns confidentially and influencing the review of the full school uniform. Pupils share their work effectively with the school community through the regular 'Straeon o'r Strade' bulletin.

A strong feature of the school is the way in which the sixth-form pupils lead their younger peers. The older pupils lead a range of committees which support and enrich pupils' experiences and contribute positively towards creating an inclusive and supportive community. The 'Pwyllgor Elusennau' organises interesting activities to raise significant amounts of money for local and national charities, while the 'Pwyllgor Cyfeillion Maths' engages pupils' interest in number skills in a fun way. The 'Pwyllgor Cyfathrebu' creates and shares a termly digital magazine, 'Tywallt y Te', which includes competitions for the school's younger pupils.

### **Spotlight 2 – 'Sain y Sosban' school radio**

Sixth-form pupils plan and share weekly broadcasts through the school radio station, 'Sain y Sosban'. They broadcast a variety of contemporary Welsh language music and share messages that align with the school's weekly well-being focus. The school community enjoys listening to the broadcast during the weekly well-being session. This provides a creative platform to share information and promote a Welsh ethos at the school and to create a strong sense of community at Ysgol y Strade.

### **Leading and improving**

The headteacher provides robust and mindful leadership. He has a clear vision to provide opportunities for pupils to excel through the medium of Welsh in all aspects of their lives. This vision is shared successfully with the school's stakeholders and is conveyed through the school motto, 'nid da lle gellir gwell'. He is supported effectively by the remainder of the leadership team so that 'Teulu'r Strade' improve together in a supportive and purposeful environment.

Overall, the leadership team's responsibilities are divided equally and sensibly. All members of the team have strategic care for specific areas that align well with the strengths of individuals. Line management arrangements are clear and provide a suitable opportunity for middle leaders to discuss the work of their department with the leadership team. The working relationship between members of the leadership team and middle leaders ensures appropriate accountability while maintaining support where necessary. Well-established performance development processes for all staff align suitably with their roles and whole-school improvement priorities. Leaders provide a valuable programme of professional learning for staff, which includes training on teaching led by the pedagogy working group. The weekly 'Gwella Gyda'n Gilydd' sessions provide an opportunity for staff to engage with specific teaching strategies and ensure that teaching practices are supported continuously.

The school has a well-structured and consistent quality assurance process. The annual work programme is coherent and clear. Whole-school quality assurance activities draw on a wide range of evidence, including a detailed analysis of internal and external data, scrutiny of pupils' work, lesson observations and discussions with pupils. Parents' views are sought and acted upon regularly.

The leadership team considers the effect of provision on pupils' standards appropriately and departments are given valuable feedback on strengths and areas for improvement. Findings are used to produce suitable whole-school and departmental improvement priorities. Middle leaders make a valuable contribution to the school's self-evaluation processes. Although there is some variation in the quality of their evaluations, many use quality assurance activities effectively to identify purposeful improvement priorities. Middle leaders plan for improvement effectively and evaluate progress against targets regularly. As a result, measurable improvements can be seen in important areas, such as developing standards of pupils' skills.

The school gives appropriate attention to national priorities. The work of leaders has led to improvements in a number of important areas, for example revising ALN arrangements, developing pupils' skills and promoting the Welsh language. However, leaders have not had enough of an effect on improving pupils' attendance, including those who are eligible for free school meals. The school has made sound progress against most of the recommendations from the last inspection, including improving the quality of teaching, provision for pupils' numeracy and digital skills and improving self-evaluation processes.

The school communicates appropriately with parents through a range of methods, such as a newsletter, information evening and pupils' progress reports. Parents have access to up-to-date and useful information about their children through a digital platform.

The governors are keen supporters of the school and are passionate about their work. They challenge leaders suitably on some aspects, such as pupils' outcomes, attendance and finance. They contribute appropriately to self-evaluation arrangements by scrutinising work jointly, conducting learning walks and listening to pupils. This strengthens their understanding of standards and the quality of teaching.

The headteacher, members of the leadership team and governors monitor the school's budget carefully, ensuring that the school's priorities are funded appropriately. The school has a budget deficit but there is a recovery plan approved by the local authority to address the current shortfall. The school prioritises expenditure of the pupil development grant appropriately to reduce the impact of poverty on pupils. Leaders gather a variety of evidence to evaluate the effect of the grant appropriately on pupils' outcomes. The performance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is generally higher than that of their peers in similar schools for two of the past three years.

The school focuses suitably on minimising barriers for pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those from low-income households. The school works closely with a variety of local charities and external organisations to ensure that pupils and parents have equal access to support. The 'Diwrnod gyda'n gilydd' day is a valuable opportunity for the school's parents and pupils and partner primary schools to meet different partners on the school site. The 'Strade yn y gymuned' strategy also provides alternative opportunities for the school's most vulnerable pupils to gain valuable experiences to develop their social skills and confidence.

### **Additional information**

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

A concern was raised regarding the management of the site during the inspection and the local authority has been informed.

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/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body/committee members through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and 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 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 (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>)

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

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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