



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Ysgol Gymraeg Y Ffin
Sandy Lane
Caldicot
NP26 4NQ**

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by

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

About Ysgol Gymraeg y Ffin

Ysgol Gymraeg y Ffin is situated in Caldicot, Monmouthshire. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work. There are 132 pupils between three and eleven years old on roll, including six part-time nursery children. Pupils are divided into five mixed-age classes.

Approximately 11% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is lower than the national percentage of 21%. Few pupils speak Welsh at home and very few come from ethnic minority backgrounds. The school has identified 19% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, and very few have a statement of special educational needs.

The headteacher was appointed to the post in November 2016, and the school was last inspected in March 2011.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

Most pupils make sound progress in their learning during their time at the school. In the foundation phase, they develop good Welsh oral skills soon after starting at the school, and develop to become successful independent learners. Most pupils build on this in key stage 2 and use their thinking and literacy skills effectively to support their learning. Pupils are well-behaved and display positive attitudes towards learning, and contribute confidently to activities and class discussions.

The school is a caring and inclusive community, which encourages its pupils to show a high level of respect and tolerance towards others. Staff provide valuable experiences for pupils and work with parents to provide rich extra-curricular experiences that support learning successfully. This contributes effectively towards pupils' pride in the language and their Welsh heritage.

Leaders share a purposeful vision for the school successfully, which supports an increasing culture of high expectations and an ethos of close and supportive teamwork in a Welsh environment.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Share best practice in teaching across the school
- R2 Develop opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills more frequently in other areas of the curriculum in key stage 2
- R3 Ensure opportunities to develop pupils' ICT skills in key stage 2

What happens next

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

Main findings

Standards: Good

On entry to the school, most pupils' basic skills correspond to what is expected, considering their linguistic background. While there, most make sound progress in their learning and develop their thinking skills effectively. Pupils with additional learning needs make effective progress from their starting points.

Pupils' oral skills develop soundly at an early stage. In the foundation phase, most use an increasing range of vocabulary successfully in various situations. They listen well and talk and discuss their work enthusiastically. In key stage 2, most develop oral skills successfully in both languages. They show pride in the Welsh language and choose to use the language confidently when speaking with their peers and adults. Most contribute well to discussions, and express their opinion clearly and maturely. This is a strong element of the school's work.

Most pupils' reading skills in the foundation phase are developing well. The youngest pupils recognise letters and sounds and are beginning to build words confidently. By the end of the phase, most develop as confident readers and read with accuracy and fluency. They show an interest in their books and discuss their content maturely, for example when holding a discussion about the life of Komodo dragons. In key stage 2, most read intelligently and with increasing fluency in various contexts in both languages, for example when reading and expressing an opinion about the contents of complaint letters in a literacy lesson.

In the foundation phase, most pupils write an increasing range of simple sentences independently and spell a majority of familiar words correctly. By Year 2, they punctuate correctly and write a range of texts across the curriculum and for different audiences effectively and correctly. The most able pupils use purposeful adjectives and vary the beginning of sentences skilfully in order to extend their work.

In key stage 2, many build on their writing skills with increasing confidence in both languages. They punctuate correctly and adapt the style and structure successfully for different topics. By the end of key stage 2, most write clearly and interestingly in a range of forms across the curriculum, for example conveying the feelings of an evacuee when leaving her home at the beginning of the Second World War.

Most pupils make good progress in their numeracy skills and use them successfully across a range of different contexts. They count and solve challenging problems at a very early stage and use these skills in various areas. By Year 2, most develop a good understanding of measurement, money, time and handling data. The most able pupils solve complex problems skilfully by using a range of different skills and strategies.

In key stage 2, most pupils have a sound understanding of number strategies. By the end of Year 6, most solve challenging problems in their mathematics lessons and order data successfully to record the results of scientific experiments on paper aeroplanes. However, pupils across key stage 2 are given few opportunities to apply their numeracy skills frequently in other areas of the curriculum.

Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developing very well across the foundation phase. Most pupils in the nursery class develop skilful control of computers and electronic tablets. By Year 2, most develop a range of skills very successfully to present information in a variety of forms, including word processing and using an app to compose music to accompany work on the Titanic.

In key stage 2, most pupils use their ICT skills appropriately to support their work in other subjects. They record and convey information suitably by using a word processor and apps to create simple videos, and they are beginning to use spreadsheets and simple formulae to organise data effectively. However, because the opportunities for them to apply their skills in other areas are limited, pupils do not build on their skills effectively enough as they transfer from the foundation phase to key stage 2.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Good

Nearly all pupils feel happy and enjoy their time at the school. They know what to do if anything is worrying them and they are confident that the staff will provide support, if necessary. Nearly all pupils are well-behaved. They are polite and thoughtful and cope with the challenge of meeting unfamiliar people courteously by listening, discussing and expressing their opinions maturely. They are considerate and friendly pupils who are very caring towards each other.

Nearly all pupils concentrate well and give of their best in learning activities. They work effectively independently, in groups and as a class, and show perseverance and willingness to learn. Most talk confidently about their work and show pride and understanding of the content. They show perseverance and an eagerness to succeed when applying themselves fully to unfamiliar experiences and ideas. As a result, foundation phase pupils select equipment maturely in order to fulfil a task's requirements. Many pupils are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and explain when they need to do to develop their work further.

Most pupils have a sound knowledge of making sensible choices about eating and drinking healthily, and about the importance of their emotional and physical wellbeing. Most pupils in key stage 2 take advantage of opportunities to take part in rich extra-curricular activities regularly, such as numerous sports clubs. This has a positive effect on their personal and social skills, in addition to developing their confidence and fitness successfully. Nearly all pupils have a sound knowledge of the rules of online safety.

Pupils take advantage of the good opportunities that the school provides for them to shoulder leadership responsibilities, and act confidently and maturely; for example, the 'Cryw Cymraeg' take pride in their success in encouraging the use of the Welsh language between pupils in lessons and informal situations. In addition, members of the 'Learning Detectives' (Ditectifs Dysgu) group are proud of their role in representing their peers in promoting effective learning. This ensures that pupils are beginning to make a valuable contribution to the school's strategic decisions.

Most pupils develop as moral and knowledgeable citizens through their increasing awareness of values that are promoted by the school. They explain the significance of the 'value of the week', which is important behaviour that is encouraged, such as

kindness or perseverance. Through their class work and understanding of initiatives such as the fair trade campaign, most pupils show a sound awareness of the wider world. A good example of this is their understanding of the importance of children's rights in other countries.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

The quality of teaching is good. Most teachers make effective use of a variety of successful teaching methods, which ensure that most pupils achieve well and are involved fully in their learning. They provide a broad and balanced curriculum and exciting experiences and challenges for pupils, which engage their interest and their enthusiasm for learning. By including the pupils' voice in planning, most staff build successfully on previous learning experiences. Across the school, staff model polished language successfully and there is an effective working relationship between them and pupils. They question skilfully to extend pupils' understanding and develop their thinking skills effectively.,

The quality of teaching is effective across the foundation phase, and staff comply with the basic principles and nurture pupils' independence at a very early stage, and develop their literacy and numeracy skills skilfully. By planning stimulating activities for them, staff ensure that pupils receive excellent opportunities that spark their imagination in real-life contexts; for example, they use a tablet to make a video of themselves shopping for clothes for the carnival and the 'fancy dress shop' in the outdoor area. Staff use all learning areas skilfully to encourage pupils to investigate and use their knowledge and skills creatively across all areas of learning. As a result, most pupils in the foundation phase apply their skills successfully and participate fully in their learning.

In general, key stage 2 teachers build on this firm foundation successfully by encouraging pupils to use their skills in a variety of challenging tasks. They plan to develop pupils' Welsh and English literacy skills robustly through a range of themes and activities that build effectively on previous learning. However, frequent opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy and ICT skills in other areas of the curriculum are limited. In most classes in key stage 2, teachers' purposeful presentations stimulate pupils and encourage them to contribute effectively to discussions, and take responsibility for their own learning. In the few activities that are not as effective, the level of challenge and expectations are not high enough to ensure that pupils achieve to the best of their ability. Over-use of worksheets in a few classes hinders the ability of a minority of pupils to extend their writing and use their independent skills regularly enough.

Teachers make purposeful use of a range of assessment for learning procedures across the school. They provide valuable oral feedback and use written comments effectively, where appropriate. This ensures that pupils have a sound understanding of what they have achieved well and what they need to do in order to improve. As a result, pupils foster good independent learning skills and improve pieces of their work effectively.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school has robust arrangements to track pupils' progress effectively. This ensures that teachers have up-to-date knowledge of pupils' progress in order to target individuals and specific groups purposefully. In addition, by tracking pupils' wellbeing regularly, they provide them with appropriate support and guidance quickly. These procedures have a positive effect on pupils' wellbeing and attitudes towards learning across the school.

After being identified, the school provides effective support to individuals and groups of pupils in line with their needs. Individual learning plans for pupils with additional needs are purposeful and useful. Teachers make consistent use of them when planning a range of specific interventions that ensure support and challenge for these pupils. In addition, the school has a robust working relationship with a range of other agencies in order to support pupils and extend support and guidance for staff.

The school has a valuable relationship with parents. Through curricular evenings and individual meetings with teachers, parents are given valuable opportunities to discuss their children's progress and development targets. A good quality newsletter, which is produced by pupils, is shared each month and provides useful information for parents. The school takes advantage of the expertise of parents and other people within the community to enrich provision and pupils' learning experiences. Good examples of this include the science and French clubs that are held by parents and friends of the school.

There is a clear focus on developing pupils' personal and social education across the school. The school provides a variety of effective opportunities for pupils to join leadership groups, such as the school council, the eco council, 'Criw Cymraeg' and the Learning Detectives (Ditectifs Dysgu). This develops their understanding of citizenship well. The use of purposeful plans and visitors ensures that they receive a range of useful information about wellbeing and safeguarding; for example, a police officer visits the school regularly to teach pupils about how to stay safe on the internet and about the dangers of speaking to strangers. The school has appropriate arrangements for eating and drinking healthily. This encourages pupils to make sensible choices in terms of eating and drinking to stay healthy. The school promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development well by providing them with valuable opportunities to reflect and share their experiences, for example by learning about values in their daily assemblies.

The school promotes pupils' awareness of their local area and their Welsh heritage effectively, for example by studying the history of Caldicot Castle and encouraging them to compete in various Eisteddfodau. This makes a valuable contribution towards developing their understanding of their Welsh heritage and culture. By taking advantage of staff expertise within the school, pupils are also given beneficial opportunities to use their imagination in their art and creative work; for example, they create their own artwork as part of a project on the wonders of the world.

The rich culture of respect, equality and fairness promotes the school's aims successfully. This is reinforced through purposeful experiences, which include studies of other countries and cultures, in addition to charitable activities. This fosters pupils' respect towards other cultures and beliefs and encourages them to grow as effective citizens.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

In a short period of time since being appointed, the headteacher and his deputy have ensured sound improvements in terms of standards, provision and leadership across the school. They have succeeded in conveying a clear and purposeful vision, which is based on raising pupils' standards, wellbeing and Welshness. As a result, the school now succeeds in establishing an increasing culture of high expectations and an ethos of close and supportive teamwork in a Welsh environment.

Members of the senior management team, in addition to members of staff who lead on aspects of the school's life and work, are developing their strategic role effectively. Regular staff meetings focus successfully on priorities for improvement, with a clear focus on raising standards and wellbeing across the school. As a result, most staff show a strong commitment to developing and promoting improvements by implementing a number of purposeful strategies, such as improving pupils' Welsh language skills and their understanding of the Welsh heritage by implementing the principles of the Welsh Language Charter effectively. Their role in the process of monitoring and ensuring quality is developing successfully.

The chair and a minority of members of the governing body are relatively new to their roles. However, they have a sound understanding of the school's performance in comparison with similar schools, in addition to progress against the priorities for improvement. They receive beneficial information from the headteacher, staff and pupils about the school's life and work; for example, pupils prepare a presentation for them on the effect of their various committees on standards and wellbeing. Sub-committees are beginning to contribute beneficially towards guiding the school's strategic direction by undertaking regular monitoring activities; for example, they undertake purposeful visits to scrutinise books and speak with pupils and staff. This makes a valuable contribution towards improving their knowledge and gives them an overview of all of the school's work to enable them to challenge the school about its performance. Over a difficult period of instability in terms of staffing changes and financial challenges, members of the governing body have undertaken their role as critical friends robustly and wisely.

Although descriptive at times, the self-evaluation document is effective and provides an honest and accurate picture of the school. There is a close link between the outcomes of the self-evaluation report and the priorities in the school development plan. This plan focuses firmly on improving standards and identifies staff responsibilities clearly. The plan has been costed appropriately and includes sensible timescales and suitable criteria to measure their effectiveness. The school has prioritised appropriately in placing a strong emphasis on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and wellbeing. The school works effectively with local schools in order to share good practice and plan jointly.

The school has an appropriate number of qualified staff, including support staff, to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, and to help and support pupils effectively. Leaders have recently produced a new and effective staffing structure that enables staff on different levels to shoulder leadership responsibilities. Responsibilities are

distributed appropriately in order to utilise staff's expertise and experiences in full. They have detailed job descriptions, which link well with their individual responsibilities. Effective performance management arrangements are in place, which set suitable objectives to develop teachers' skills further and are based on the priorities in the development plan. As a result, staff are given appropriate opportunities to develop professionally in line with their needs and those of the school.

The headteacher and governors manage expenditure very carefully. They work with the local authority by implementing an agreed plan to eliminate over-expenditure in the funding as a result of circumstances beyond their control. Good use is made of the pupil development grant to improve provision to develop the literacy and numeracy skills and wellbeing of pupils who are eligible to receive it.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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

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Publication Section
Estyn
Anchor Court, Keen Road
Cardiff
CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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