



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

A report on

**Ysgol Gynradd Cynwyl Elfed
Surgeon Street
Cynwyl Elfed
Carmarthen
Carmarthenshire
SA33 6TR**

Date of inspection: January 2019

by

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

About Ysgol Gynradd Cynwyl Elfed

Ysgol Gynradd Cynwyl Elfed is situated on the outskirts of the village, which is a few miles from the town of Carmarthen in Carmarthenshire local authority. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work, and English is introduced in key stage 2.

Ysgol Cynwyl Elfed is one of three schools that operate within a formal federation. The school has been part of a formal federation with Ysgol Llanpumsaint for a number of years and, very recently, Ysgol Abernant has joined them formally following a period as an informal member of that federation.

There are 65 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll. Approximately 34% of pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes. Over a three-year-period, slightly less than 10% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals. This is lower than the national percentage of 19%. The school has identified around 32% of its pupils as having additional learning needs. This is higher than the national percentage of 21%.

The headteacher was appointed to the post in January 2015 and the school was last inspected in July 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

As headteacher of three schools in a local federation, her vision is based on the principle of ensuring that pupils continue to receive inclusive education within their communities. The school places a strong emphasis on the Welsh language and Welsh culture. Most pupils have a sound understanding of what they need to do to stay healthy and the importance of becoming moral and knowledgeable citizens, who have the skills to contribute actively to life in their local community. Adults are effective language models and provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their oral skills on a daily basis. The school is a caring community that promotes the importance of good behaviour, courtesy and respect. As a result, most pupils enjoy coming to school, feel safe there and treat each other, staff and visitors with respect.

Many pupils make appropriate progress during their time at the school, particularly in terms of their oral skills, which are developing well. Most read at a level that is appropriate for their age and ability, and make suitable progress in their mathematical skills and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. However, not all members of staff have high enough expectations to ensure that all individuals within the school community operate to the best of their ability. As a result, only a few pupils, including those who are more able, achieve well consistently in all areas of learning.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure that leaders focus on the practical procedures that will have the most positive effect on teaching and standards
- R2 Ensure that all teachers have high enough expectations of pupils
- R3 Ensure that teachers' planning arrangements in key stage 2 are detailed enough to meet the needs of all groups of pupils, and that they implement them effectively
- R4 Improve pupils' writing skills in both languages, where appropriate
- R5 Improve provision to enable pupils to use their numeracy skills at an appropriate level across the curriculum

What happens next

The school will produce an action plan to show how it will address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Many pupils make appropriate progress during their time at the school, but only a few make good progress. Very few more able pupils achieve to the best of their ability consistently. However, most pupils with additional learning needs make good progress against their targets and have full access to the curriculum.

Pupils' oral Welsh skills in the foundation phase are developing well and, by the end of Year 2, most use rich and natural language when talking to adults and with their peers. Most read to a level that is appropriate for their age and ability. Younger pupils listen attentively and respond enthusiastically to traditional stories, such as the story of Cinderella. Most pupils at the top of the phase read simple texts intelligently and are very fond of discussing stories that are familiar to them. Many are beginning to express an opinion about their favourite characters and give simple reasons for their choice. Most pay good attention to punctuation in order to colour their reading aloud. By the end of the foundation phase, most pupils develop suitable writing skills. A majority write a series of simple sentences for different purposes appropriately. Examples include creating an information pamphlet about the planets, describing Jewish celebrations and a report to present the weather forecast. However, only a minority form letters correctly and few use capital letters and full-stops consistently.

In key stage 2, pupils' communication skills are developing positively in both languages. At the top of the school, most discuss their work confidently and use subject language intelligently and accurately. Most pupils in Year 6 are confident readers and enjoy reading aloud. Many discuss books sensibly and refer to the main characters and events, and express their views maturely. Most use their reading skills purposefully in their work to gather information, for example about Welsh rivers in their geography lessons. Progress in most pupils' writing skills in Welsh and English is only adequate by the end of key stage 2. Most write for different purposes and use correct forms. For example, they have written a newspaper article about building new houses in the village, a persuasive poster to establish a club for young people and an astronaut's diary. However, only a minority present their work neatly enough by using legible handwriting. Around half spell words that they have experienced with consistent accuracy and a few write meaningfully and develop their ideas interestingly.

Most pupils' mathematical skills are developing appropriately. They have an increasing understanding of number, shape and measurement, and apply them suitably in a few different situations. For example, a few pupils in the foundation phase have created wrapping paper by placing shapes in a particular order. A few younger pupils use basic non-standard measurements to make a cake for Cinderella in the mud kitchen, while Year 2 pupils place twigs in order according to their length, and choose the one that is closest to their height confidently.

Older pupils in key stage 2 apply their numeracy skills in a limited number of areas, such as science. They have created a table of the results of an investigation based on how the weight of a ball affects the diameter of a pothole in sand. This task was a

good opportunity for them to calculate the total and mean, and record their findings in the form of a graph. However, there are very few successful examples of where pupils have applied their numeracy skills confidently across other curriculum subjects.

Most pupils in the foundation phase use information and communication technology (ICT) equipment confidently and use their computer skills purposefully. At the bottom of the phase, most pupils control a simple electronic toy and use a drawing program effectively. By the end of the foundation phase, most make effective use of 'QR' codes to access information, and a simple data program to create graphs.

In key stage 2, pupils use a variety of computer programs confidently. Most use a word processing program successfully and for a suitable purpose. For example, they have written a report on a trip to Cardiff Castle and created effective electronic presentations on a theme that is based on life in the twentieth century. However, examples of older pupils applying their data-handling skills and using spreadsheets in broad contexts across the curriculum are limited.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Most pupils enjoy school and feel safe there. They are happy to talk to any member of staff if they are concerned, and are wholly confident that they will respond immediately to any concerns they may have. Pupils have a suitable understanding of how to stay safe, particularly when using the internet. Most older pupils explain the importance of keeping contact details confidential, for example. Pupils appreciate the input of the police education officer, which adds successfully to their understanding of safety.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of what they need to do to stay healthy. They make sensible choices in terms of food and drink, and understand the importance of keeping fit and taking part in exercise activities, such as running a mile a day. Bronze ambassadors plan interesting games for their younger peers during break time and lunchtime. This contributes effectively towards developing their physical skills further. However, only a minority of pupils take part regularly in the extra-curricular clubs that are available to them, such as sports clubs, folk dancing and stepping, for example.

Members of the school council and eco council are active and support aspects of other pupils' wellbeing conscientiously. For example, they work with members of the parents' association to provide play equipment, seating and shelter from the sun to improve the play area. However, their role in leading their activities and making decisions about their learning has not yet been developed in full.

Most pupils develop as moral and knowledgeable citizens, particularly by contributing actively to the life of the village and the wider community. They develop their understanding of their culture and local area further by studying the theme of 'Fy Milltir Sgwâr' (My Square Mile). For example, pupils' art work in key stage 2 is based on Y Gangell, the home of Elfed, the famous poet from the area. Pupils welcome members of the community to share a number of their activities. These include an afternoon tea and a soup and songs evening. They also share produce with the elderly in the local area following the harvest service. This raises their awareness of

the importance of being kind to their neighbours and the advantages of living in a close-knit community. Pupils support a number of local and national charities, which contributes somewhat to their understanding of the wider world. However, their knowledge of the lives of people in other countries is limited. Most develop their Welshness successfully by using the Welsh language confidently both inside and outside the classroom. Many pupils develop their confidence by performing on local or national stages, where the school has been successful, particularly in folk dancing.

Most pupils treat visitors politely and with respect. Most behave well during break time and lunchtime. Most have positive attitudes to learning. In the foundation phase, they are ready to learn promptly at the beginning of lessons, and move freely between activities in the classroom and the outdoor area. However, at times, a few pupils in key stage 2 take too much time to settle at the beginning of lessons, and they do not always concentrate when working on their tasks. As a result, only a few older pupils make the best possible progress.

Pupils in the foundation phase contribute enthusiastically to what they would like to learn within specific themes, but the contribution of older pupils is not as evident or effective. Many pupils in the foundation phase are willing to suggest different ways of solving problems. For example, they discuss confidently the best way to make a crown for Cinderella in the forest area. However, very few pupils in key stage 2 display these skills increasingly or naturally in their work.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

The school places a strong emphasis on teaching pupils about Welsh culture, and the Welsh language and Welshness are at the heart of all of its life and work. Staff are effective language models and provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their oral skills. This is done successfully within the classrooms and around the school consistently. Extra-curricular activities, such as 'adran yr Urdd' and the 'clwb clebran' conversation club contribute further to developing pupils' language. As a result, most pupils' oral skills are robustly good. A rich variety of opportunities is provided for pupils to learn about Welsh culture. For example, they compete successfully in eisteddfodau and study the work of contemporary poets, such as Aneirin Karadog and Tudur Dylan Jones. Visits to the local chapel, the Welsh Folk Museum and the Big Pit promote pupils' awareness of Welsh history successfully.

The school's schemes of work meet the curriculum's statutory requirements and the principles of the foundation phase appropriately. The curriculum is delivered through interesting themes, which ensure that many pupils, particularly in the foundation phase, apply themselves enthusiastically to their learning. Teachers promote pupils' reading skills well. For example, classroom arrangements provide regular opportunities for pupils to practice their skills by reading independently and reading under the teachers' guidance. As a result, most pupils make appropriate progress as they move through the school. Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills across the curriculum. However, learning experiences do not always give enough attention to improving pupils' writing skills, or provide enough opportunities for them to apply their numeracy skills across the other subjects.

In the foundation phase, the indoor and outdoor learning areas are used to nurture pupils' independent learning skills successfully. Teachers and classroom assistants

work together effectively to plan learning experiences that build suitably on pupils' knowledge and understanding. Focus activities and continuous provision support pupils' learning effectively by providing them with stimulating and creative experiences. For example, they provide opportunities for them to design a wedding dress, make a cake and compose a tune for Cinderella's wedding. Staff prepare attractive and purposeful resources to promote pupils' curiosity and encourage them to develop as confident learners. Although these classroom arrangements and robust teaching methods are relatively new, they are already beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' standards.

In key stage 2, teachers are beginning to place a specific focus on developing pupils' independent learning skills. For example, they provide suitable opportunities for them to consider what they would like to learn within the class themes. The content of individual lessons is interesting and engages many pupils' interest. However, in a minority of classes, lesson presentations are too long and cause a few pupils to lose interest. Teachers share lesson objectives with pupils regularly and set clear criteria for them. However, teachers' teaching plans do not always place enough focus on ensuring that pupils develop their skills in a constructive manner. As a result, many pupils' progress is inconsistent as they move from one year to the next. Support staff are used very effectively to support learners. Classroom assistants provide teachers with robust support and make a very valuable contribution to improving the standards of specific pupils.

Many teachers and classroom assistants use varied and appropriate questioning methods, which are successful in developing pupils' responses further. In the few classes in which practice is at its best, questioning develops pupils' thinking skills skilfully. However, a majority of teachers' expectations are too low and there is inconsistency in the way in which a minority manage pupils' behaviour. As a result, a very few pupils disrupt the smooth running of a minority of learning sessions. In a minority of classes in which class management is poor and there is a lack of systematic planning, a significant few pupils make limited progress. On the whole, teachers respond consistently to pupils' work and their positive comments praise their efforts well. However, in a minority of classes, feedback is not always constructive enough and does not challenge pupils enough to improve their work and ensure that they make the best possible progress.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

The school is a caring community that promotes the importance of good behaviour, courtesy and respect appropriately. As a result, many pupils treat each other, staff and visitors with respect.

The school has an effective system for tracking pupils' progress. The headteacher and teachers use this procedure appropriately when analysing teachers' assessments and national test outcomes. However, this practice has not been embedded in full.

Teachers use a range of test results confidently to plan and provide literacy or numeracy support for individuals and specific groups of pupils. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is appropriate. Teachers identify pupils' educational needs at an early stage and plan suitable support for them. All pupils with additional

learning needs have an up-to-date individual education plan. However, their targets are not clear, specific or measurable enough. Procedures also do not enable parents to have input when producing the individual education plans. Support staff are very aware of the improvement targets of pupils with additional learning needs and make a valuable contribution to their progress. As a result, most pupils with additional learning needs make good progress towards reaching their targets. Staff monitor the progress of pupils who receive interventions regularly and adapt or remove support, where appropriate.

The school works successfully with external agencies to receive advice and support on how to respond effectively to pupils' additional needs. For example, the school works regularly with the educational psychologist and a specialist hearing impairment teacher to support specific pupils.

A few pupils are given opportunities to shoulder responsibility by becoming members of different councils or leadership groups within the school. This broadens their understanding of the importance of being active citizens and contributing to their community occasionally. However, the contribution of these groups has not yet had a sufficient influence on the school's strategic procedures.

Staff know the pupils and their families well and have a sound and effective relationship with a majority of them. Staff share information about the school's activities with parents regularly through community newsletters. Parents appreciate the opportunities that are provided for them, and these are a way for them to better understand how to support their children. A good example of this was the open evening that was held recently to explain the school's different procedures and interventions.

The school has appropriate arrangements for eating and drinking healthily, and pupils receive valuable information that promotes their awareness of the importance of physical and mental health and wellbeing. Good examples of this include the school's fruit shop, running a mile a day and the outdoor lessons that are held on a Friday afternoon. The school has a valuable personal and social education programme, which raises pupils' awareness of a number of important aspects, including drug abuse, challenging stereotypes, highway safety and the dangers of smoking.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual and moral development effectively by providing them with appropriate opportunities to reflect in assemblies and other collective sessions.

Provision to develop pupils' artistic and creative skills is sound. This includes drawing by emulating the style of a local artist, competing in the Urdd eisteddfod and taking part in Christmas and Easter services regularly. Pupils are also given valuable opportunities to develop their understanding of their culture and local community by going on appropriate trips. For example, they have visited Y Gangell, the birthplace of Elfed, been on a trip to the Urdd residential centre in Cardiff and experienced the ancient tradition of Y Fari Lwyd. However, there are few opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of the wider world.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The headteacher has established a sensible vision for the schools within the federation, which ensures that they are able to continue to provide inclusive education for pupils in their communities. The headteacher and members of the governing body have shared this vision successfully with teachers, support staff, parents and pupils. Most policies and strategic documents are common across all of the schools in the federation. This promotes unity and co-operation at all levels, and is a means of trying to reduce staff workloads while ensuring consistency in the experiences that are provided to pupils. Leaders work diligently to develop the federation as an effective learning centre. However, leaders and managers at all levels do not set high enough expectations for all staff and pupils. As a result, provision and standards are too varied within and across the schools that were inspected.

Job descriptions reflect a majority of staff responsibilities fairly. However, they do not always identify a few key responsibilities that are carried out and that are essential to the effective day-to-day running of the schools.

Various staff meetings are held jointly across the schools in the federation and within the individual schools. These meetings place a clear focus on raising standards and improving the quality of provision. Leaders provide appropriate opportunities for staff to share positive features from their work with their peers within their own school and the other schools in the federation. They have also begun to work with other federated schools to share their practice. This is beginning to have a positive effect on standards in most classes.

Performance management procedures are appropriate and allow leaders to identify individuals' professional needs, and provide specific support and training in order for them to develop and improve their practice in the classroom. Where teachers have taken advantage of these opportunities, there has been a positive effect on provision and standards. However, a few teachers within the federation have not taken full advantage of the support that has been provided. As a result, many teaching strategies are not effective enough in a few classes, particularly in one of the schools.

Promoting the Welsh language and Welsh culture is at the heart of all of the schools' life and work, and leaders plan reasonably appropriately to provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in formal and informal situations. Priority has been given recently to developing pupils' oral Welsh skills, which has had a positive effect on their standards in this area.

Members of the governing body have an increasing awareness of what is working effectively in the schools, in addition to a number of issues that need to be improved. They support the schools well and challenge the headteacher gently but suitably where necessary. However, governors have been too slow to address important issues in relation to teaching at one of the schools. This has had a detrimental effect on the progress and attainment of a few pupils.

The federation has comprehensive and direct procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of provision and standards. However, reports that derive from these are often too positive and do not always reflect the situations accurately enough. As a result, a few teachers do not always realise the extent to which they need to improve their practice.

Where leaders have identified particular areas for development and have planned appropriate strategies to address them, the situation has improved. Priorities that are identified in the current development plan link directly to the outcomes of the school's self-evaluation procedures. However, the school has not identified a few important aspects as aspects for improvement. For example, it has not identified the need to develop pupils' writing skills or their use of numeracy at an appropriate level across the curriculum.

Overall, the schools use their resources efficiently. Decisions about expenditure and financial planning link appropriately to the strategic priorities and planning for improvement. On the whole, staffing levels are appropriate and there are sufficient learning resources available on each site to deliver the curriculum. Leaders plan activities jointly, which enables pupils from the different schools within the federation to come together regularly and take part in social and educational activities. This expands their opportunities and prepares them well for the next steps in their education.

The school makes prudent and appropriate use of different grants, including the pupil development grant and the small and rural schools grant, to raise standards and improve pupils' wellbeing. Leaders evaluate the effectiveness of these grants effectively in terms of progress, where appropriate.

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.

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

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Publication date: 01/04/2019