



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

A report on

**Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon
Heol Gwyddon
Abercarn
NP11 5GX**

Date of inspection: March 2020

by

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

About Y.G. Cwm Gwyddon

Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon is situated in Abercarn, in Caerphilly local authority. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work. There are 244 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including 27 part-time nursery age pupils. They are taught in 10 classes.

On average, over the last three years, around 12% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average of 18%. The school has identified around 11% of its pupils as having special educational needs. This is well below the national average of 21%. Very few pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes.

The headteacher was appointed in September 2011, and the school was last inspected in February 2013.

The school is currently working with Welsh Government and other schools to proceed with developments in relation to reforming education in Wales. It is also a lead school for initial teacher education.

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

The headteacher provides innovative, strong and caring leadership. She has high expectations of herself, staff and pupils. As a result, she has developed the school as a creative and effective learning community. She receives excellent support from the deputy headteacher, and the senior team is very enthusiastic. Leaders share a clear vision for the school with all stakeholders. One of the excellent features of the school is the way in which staff work exceptionally well together.

During their time at the school, nearly all pupils make very strong progress from their starting points and use their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills very successfully in different areas across the school.

Teachers provide an imaginative curriculum that engages pupils' interest very well and has a very positive effect on most pupils' motivation, commitment and achievement.

Nearly all pupils' standards of wellbeing, behaviour and attitudes to learning are commendable. As a result of teachers' high expectations, nearly all pupils respond well to the challenges that they set. One of the school's strengths is the caring and inclusive ethos that is seen in all classes, which fosters an environment where pupils and staff treat each other with respect.

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

Recommendations

R1 Improve the presentation of pupils' work

R2 Continue to share highly effective teaching across the school, the consortium and further afield

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to how the school uses a research project to reduce teachers' workload, and highly effective provision for pupils who are eligible for free school meals, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Excellent

During their time at the school, nearly all pupils make very strong progress, and many make higher than the expected progress in developing their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. They use these skills confidently and successfully in a wide range of creative and co-ordinated activities. Pupils with special educational needs make strong progress, and a few make higher than the expected progress. Most pupils who are eligible for free school meals make excellent progress, and the few most able make exceptional progress. Nearly all pupils develop as conscientious and confident learners with mature independent working skills. This is an excellent feature across the school.

Across the school, nearly all pupils' speaking and listening skills are of very high quality. From an early age, many make very good progress in developing their speaking skills from a low starting point. They speak Welsh very soon after starting in the Reception class. By the time they reach Year 2, most speak maturely and confidently, and use extensive vocabulary when explaining their tasks clearly, for example when discussing the diary of Benjamin Hall. As pupils continue to build on their communication skills, by the end of key stage 2, many are extremely articulate and confident speakers. Nearly all pupils communicate very maturely in both languages and express their ideas, opinions and feelings effectively and clearly when working in pairs, groups and as a whole class.

Most pupils enjoy reading and make sound progress over time. In the foundation phase, most develop their phonological awareness effectively and use suitable strategies in order to identify new words successfully. From an early age, many develop a firm foundation of letters and sounds quickly and, by the Reception class, read simple words. In Year 2, most form unfamiliar words successfully and read with appropriate expression. They discuss the context of books enthusiastically and refer to the features of text effectively. By the end of key stage 2, nearly all pupils develop sound reading skills, in line with their age and ability. They show a good understanding of various texts, such as fiction, non-fiction and poetry. By Year 6, they use their skills very well to gather relevant information from books, projects and websites to enrich their work. A good example is the work with an author and illustrator to produce a Welsh adaptation of the novel, 'Bus Stop at the end of the World' ('Arhosfan ym mhen draw'r Byd'). This has had a very positive influence on raising standards of Welsh reading at the top of the stage.

From an early age, most pupils develop purposeful early writing skills by making marks in the sand and writing letters and simple words successfully. By the end of the foundation phase, they punctuate their work and spell words in line with their age and ability. They write interestingly in a variety of contexts, for example when writing a newspaper article about the Great Fire of London. In key stage 2, pupils write in a suitable range of genres. A good example is Year 4 pupils using their understanding of the features of formal letters to inform parents about a sponsored walk. By the end of the stage, nearly all pupils write interesting extended pieces of a high standard in both languages, such as a letter from a soldier during the Second World War. Writing is thoughtful and considers feelings and emotions very effectively, such as a

poem on the topic 'Hunllef' ('Nightmare'). However, across the school, a few pupils' presentation of work and handwriting are not neat enough.

Pupils' skills and confidence in numeracy are developing very well, and most apply their skills increasingly effectively as they move through the school. Very quickly, nearly all read and write numbers to 10 and beyond confidently. Across the foundation phase, most understand mathematical concepts, such as place value, shape, measurement, time and data handling very well. In Year 2, pupils learn simple fractions by using different types of ingredients to make a pizza. In key stage 2, pupils collect, analyse and present information skilfully in different ways to support their work across the curriculum. They do this well in their scientific investigations and theme activities. Older pupils complete numeracy challenges regularly, for example to solve problems in relation to the Gwyddon colliery and rainforests.

Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are a strength across the school. In the foundation phase, most use their skills confidently when creating a pictogram of the class's favourite shoes. In Year 2, they create a simple algorithm to direct an electronic toy to move around famous buildings. In key stage 2, pupils use the internet effectively to search for information, and create multimedia presentations successfully on what types of buildings are able to withstand an earthquake. Older pupils use spreadsheets effectively, and create and interpret databases correctly. They hold a clear discussion about the results of their investigations, for example when measuring the size of shadows from the light source.

Most pupils' creative skills are a strong feature across the school. Foundation phase pupils develop their early artistic skills by emulating the styles of local and national artists to a high standard in various media.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Nearly all pupils' behaviour is excellent across the school. They are extremely polite and treat each other, staff and visitors with maturity and a high level of respect. This is an exceptional feature and contributes significantly towards the very inclusive and effective learning environment. A good example of this is the way in which pupils help each other in lessons and during break times.

Most pupils communicate exceptionally well with visitors and adults. They discuss aspects of school life enthusiastically and, through the effective use of discussion partners, communicate openly and honestly with each other.

Nearly all pupils are highly conscientious, express their opinions effectively and take their leadership duties seriously as members of various councils. They show a clear understanding of their responsibilities and play an important part in making decisions. This has a positive effect on the school's day-to-day life by developing their personal and social skills.

Nearly all pupils have an excellent attitude towards their learning. From an early age, they show high levels of concentration and resilience in their work. They develop as enthusiastic learners, and respond very well to the caring and inclusive ethos that is an integral and highly effective part of school life. Nearly all are enthusiastic in lessons and work diligently for extended periods when completing their activities.

Pupils are always ready for a challenge in their learning, and show an excellent level of independence. From an early age, pupils are willing to discuss and set individual learning targets. This promotes their independence and gives them ownership of their learning. They have a sound understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. Across the school, they respond very enthusiastically to regular opportunities to suggest ideas about what they would like to learn in relation to the class themes. Most pupils work productively individually, in pairs and in groups. They are mature and discuss their work enthusiastically while developing as ambitious and confident learners.

Nearly all pupils show obvious pride in their Welshness and very positive attitudes towards the Welsh language. Most speak Welsh confidently with their peers, and understand the advantage of being completely bilingual in their everyday lives. Pupils' pride in their school and their local area is striking. Through a rich range of curricular and extra-curricular activities, they participate fully in local culture and enrich their learning experiences. The innovative work of the 'Cryw Cymru Cŵl' contributes very effectively to these attitudes.

By taking part in community activities, most pupils develop as well-rounded and responsible members of their community. They develop as conscientious citizens by raising money for charities and good causes. An exceptionally good example is the way in which the school raised money recently to buy a defibrillator for 'Jack's Appeal'.

All pupils feel safe at school and know whom to approach when they need support. They understand the importance of staying safe online, and explain in detail what to do if they are worried.

Nearly all pupils have a mature understanding of the importance of keeping healthy by eating and drinking sensibly and participating in physical activity. An exceptionally good example of this is the 'lonawr Iachus' (Healthy January) initiative. They take full advantage of their local area to hold activities to promote their fitness, for example a sponsored walk to the local mountain, Twmbarlwm.

Pupils' attendance rates over the last four years have been very high and compare very well with similar schools. Most understand the importance of regular attendance, and state confidently the positive effect that it has on their learning.

Teaching and learning experiences: Excellent

Teachers provide a stimulating and imaginative curriculum that develops pupils' skills very successfully across the areas of learning. Teachers have begun to revise schemes of work creatively in preparation for the new curriculum for Wales. This is beginning to have a very positive effect on most pupils' motivation, commitment and achievement. From an early age, pupils are given beneficial and increasing opportunities to contribute to specific pathways that are of interest to them, and set the themes within their classes. Pupils' enthusiasm, enjoyment and pride in their learning are extremely impressive across the school.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils in terms of their behaviour and learning achievements. The respectful and constructive way in which adults within the school

interact with pupils fosters their confidence and encourages them to try without fear of making mistakes when completing their tasks. As a result, nearly all pupils, including those who are eligible for free school meals, make good progress or better in their learning.

Nearly all teachers are effective and enthusiastic language models. This has a very positive influence on most pupils' standards of oracy. They use a varied range of resources and teaching methods, which engage pupils' interest and commitment to their learning very successfully.

The school takes advantage of continuous opportunities to enrich the curriculum, for example through educational visits and the input of specialists. The most effective examples are workshops by Welsh National Opera for pupils at the top of key stage 2, and an artist's visit to the school to create a mural of the local area.

Teachers plan creatively to provide purposeful and cohesive opportunities to develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills skilfully across the areas of learning. They ensure that they are given regular opportunities to practise and apply their skills, and make meaningful links to their learning. An excellent example of this is the enterprise project to create and sell dinosaur badges to support the National Museum in Cardiff.

The principles of the foundation phase are sound and reflect the staff's very good understanding of the phase. They plan an effective balance between focus activities and opportunities for pupils to work independently in the learning areas to apply their skills purposefully. Imaginative use of the outdoor environment provides variety and a very good range of provision, for example by providing opportunities for pupils to plant potatoes in the school garden.

Strong co-operation between teachers and support staff contributes effectively towards creating a very inclusive and supportive climate for learning. This ensures that nearly all pupils receive the support necessary to develop as confident individuals.

Teachers have very good knowledge of their pupils' needs in terms of learning and wellbeing. They use information from observations and assessments effectively to plan the next steps in pupils' learning successfully. Staff encourage pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers regularly, and the way in which pupils are given an opportunity to choose the level of the task gives them ownership of their learning. This promotes their independence and ensures that they understand the next steps in their learning. This is a strong feature of teaching.

The school promotes Welshness highly effectively through a wide range of rich activities for pupils to learn about Welsh history and culture, and use the Welsh language at every opportunity. This ignites pupils' pride in their identity, language and country. This is supported successfully through valuable opportunities for pupils to learn about their local area, for example their study of the theme 'Aur Du' ('Black Gold'), based on the history of Abercarn Colliery.

The classes and corridors are well-maintained, colourful and stimulating places in which pupils learn happily and productively.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The quality of care, support and guidance that are provided by the school is excellent, and has a very positive effect on pupils' standards and wellbeing. The school provides a safe, familial, caring and highly inclusive environment for all pupils.

The school has very comprehensive and effective procedures to track and monitor pupils' progress, wellbeing and behaviour. Staff use these procedures highly effectively to identify pupils' educational, emotional and social needs at an early stage. This helps them to provide an interesting education that engages pupils' interest and addresses their needs effectively.

The additional learning needs co-ordinator provides excellent guidance and support for teachers. All pupils with special educational needs have a high quality individual education plan, with measurable and challenging targets. These plans are reviewed regularly in consultation with pupils and their parents, and adapted as necessary. An example of the effect of these interventions is the notable increase in the attendance levels of groups of pupils, and their willingness to learn. One extremely strong feature in relation to the school's work is its commitment to ensuring that pupils make quick progress in their learning as a result of interventions, without the need for them to receive these interventions for extended periods. For example, there are purposeful strategies for vulnerable pupils to go to a quiet room, which allows them to discuss their feelings during challenging times. This is an effective means of increasing their confidence and ensuring that they are ready to learn.

The school has very strong links with its community and takes full advantage of its support, such as regular visits to perform at the local church for class assemblies and concerts. The relationship between the school and parents is sound and productive. Friends of Cwm Gwyddon support the school financially through various activities, for example by making improvements to the outdoor area. The school has strong partnerships with other nearby schools, including the local secondary schools and external agencies, which is an effective means of enriching provision for pupils.

The school provides comprehensive plans to develop its pupils' personal and social education, which foster aspects such as respect and equality, and promote the school's aims highly effectively. The school provides excellent opportunities to promote pupils' social, moral and spiritual skills by using various strategies, which include providing opportunities for pupils to voice their opinions. These have a very positive effect on pupils' ability to work together and respect each other's views within an inclusive and caring environment. Staff encourage pupils to be responsible citizens who are willing to help others, for example by raising money for charities. This has a positive effect on their understanding of other people's needs.

The school provides skilfully to develop pupils' spiritual and cultural attitudes. Rich opportunities are organised for them to reflect in collective worship sessions, which are often based on stories from the Bible or themes, such as anti-bullying week. They are given opportunities to appreciate and celebrate the differences between themselves and their peers. As a result, pupils have a sound understanding of religious and moral issues, and issues that occur in the wider world.

Teachers organise rich educational visits and invite interesting visitors to the school, which contribute positively to pupils' understanding of the importance of fostering broad and diverse social attitudes. The school has very thorough arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily, and encourages pupils to take part regularly in the good range of learning clubs.

Opportunities that pupils are given to develop their creative and expressive arts skills are an excellent feature. The school provides an excellent variety of opportunities for pupils to perform at the school, in the local community and further afield. This develops their self-confidence, their pride in themselves, and their ability to work with others. Good examples include sports and music activities, and Urdd competitions. Pupils at the top of the school, for example, work with musicians from Welsh National Opera every year, and enjoy opportunities to be creative. Welsh history and culture are promoted daily, which are effective elements of the school's work.

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

Leadership and management: Excellent

The headteacher provides innovative, strong and caring leadership. She has high expectations of herself, the staff and pupils. As a result, she has developed the school as a creative and effective learning community, which reflects the motto 'Four Great Walls – Surrounding the Future' very successfully. The headteacher shares responsibilities very effectively, particularly to develop staff as leaders within the school. The deputy headteacher provides excellent support to the headteacher, and has a prominent role in moving ahead with whole-school priorities.

The senior management team is enthusiastic and effective. Leaders share a clear vision for the school, which focuses strongly on supporting pupils' wellbeing, and developing ambitious and confident learners within a Welsh environment. This vision is shared very successfully with all stakeholders. As a result, staff work within a culture of strong professional and educational values. This reinforces the excellent ethos of teamwork that exists in all aspects of the school's life. Leaders share responsibilities sensibly among the staff, and encourage them to make decisions and lead on specific areas.

The headteacher is innovative in undertaking local and national priorities, and projects and initiatives that are beneficial to pupils. She promotes innovation continuously, and is committed fully to developing a school that shares good practice across the school and further afield. This work permeates all of the school's work naturally and incorporates the principles of the new curriculum for Wales. The school is an effective learning community in which staff learn from each other in a supportive environment. A notable example of this is the way in which the school is innovative in beginning to develop a creative, stimulating and practical curriculum that engages nearly all pupils' interest in their learning. This has led to challenging and stimulating activities, which have a very positive effect on pupils' standards of literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Leaders hold regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress, which ensures that all teachers are accountable for the quality of provision and standards that are achieved

in their classes. As a result, teachers have a very good knowledge of their pupils' needs, including those who are eligible for free school meals, and this leads to high standards and levels of wellbeing across the school.

Self-evaluation procedures are very detailed and place a clear focus on pupils' standards of wellbeing and attainment. This contributes successfully towards maintaining and improving further the good standards that can be seen. There is a clear link between the outcomes of these procedures and the school development plan. Leaders have a robust record of ensuring improvement and developing the school as a successful learning hub. For example, work to improve pupils' writing in the foundation phase through oral activities has led to high standards. All of the school's leaders play an active part in monitoring processes and, as a result, have sound, up-to-date knowledge of the school's performance and respond to improvements, such as developing pupils' reading effectively in Welsh and English.

The school has robust procedures to manage the performance of teachers and assistants, based on the priorities in the school development plan and individuals' professional needs. An excellent feature is the excellent arrangements and opportunities that the school provides for staff's professional development. Staff are given valuable opportunities to share their expertise, skills and training across the consortium and further afield. Senior leaders encourage staff to take responsibility for various projects and activities, which prepares them well for the future. An excellent example is the school's response to reducing teachers' workload when reviewing the policy for marking and responding to pupils' work, which weaves successfully into planning and differentiation procedures across the school. As a result, this has had a positive effect on staff wellbeing and pupils' progress.

The school has excellent pedagogical partnerships with Welsh-medium schools in south east Wales. By leading the 'Aiming for Excellence' in teaching project, the school succeeds in disseminating good practice in pedagogy across the counties in the consortium. This has a positive effect on standards of teaching and learning within the school and further afield. The school is developing the project this year to train and develop future staff and teachers across the consortium.

Governors are very supportive of the school and know it well. They receive comprehensive information from the headteacher and contribute successfully to the self-evaluation process by taking part in learning walks, talking to pupils and interviewing curriculum leaders. As a result, they have a sound knowledge of the school's strengths, areas for improvement and performance. They use this information effectively in order to hold the school to account for its performance.

The headteacher and governors monitor the use of the budget effectively. The budget for implementing the school's priorities for improvement is earmarked clearly. The school has a detailed expenditure plan for the pupil development grant to provide purposeful interventions for specific groups of pupils with lower basic skills. Leaders track pupils' progress effectively and, as a result, more able pupils who are eligible for free school meals make exceptional progress.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent 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 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, 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 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, 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' wellbeing, 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

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: 07/05/2020