



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

A report on

**Ysgol Gynradd Talsarnau
Talsarnau
Gwynedd
LL47 6TA**

Date of inspection: February 2020

by

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

About Ysgol Gynradd Talsarnau

The school is situated in the village of Talsarnau, which is a few miles from Harlech in Gwynedd local authority. There are 45 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including five part-time nursery age pupils. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes.

Over a three-year period, slightly above 7% of pupils have been eligible for free school meals, which is lower than the national average of 18%. Most pupils come from Welsh-speaking homes and very few are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work.

The school has identified slightly above 12% of its pupils as having special educational needs. This is lower than the national percentage of 21%. Very few pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

The school was last inspected in July 2014 and the current strategic headteacher, who is also the headteacher of another nearby school, has been in charge since 2016.

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 school is a caring and inclusive community that promotes pupils' Welshness and their personal, emotional and social development very successfully.

Pupils work very effectively with their peers, and treat them with respect and courtesy. They are confident and intelligent learners who behave excellently in the classroom and around the school. Pupils' attitudes to work are excellent and they show great pride in their school. They are developing very effectively as learners who are willing to persevere and play an active part in their own learning. As a result, most make sound and consistent progress, which at least corresponds to what is expected when considering their age.

The headteacher and assistant headteacher provide innovative and robust leadership, which ensures a clear strategic direction for the school and a culture that promotes continuous improvement. They have a strong commitment to developing staff and ensuring that the school is developing as a very influential learning organisation. Staff lead learning communities effectively both within the school and beyond. They are enthusiastic, dedicated and work very well together to ensure that the school provides excellent care, support and guidance to all pupils.

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

Recommendations

- R1 Improve pupils' extended writing skills in the foundation phase
- R2 Ensure that teachers provide regular opportunities for all pupils to achieve to the best of their ability

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 developing as an effective learning organisation, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

At the bottom of the foundation phase, many pupils' literacy and numeracy skills correspond to what is expected for their age. As they move through the school, most make good progress in their learning from their starting points. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress in line with their targets.

Most pupils have strong Welsh oral skills. They listen attentively to presentations and respond confidently. By the end of the foundation phase, most speak enthusiastically about their work and use an increasing range of relevant vocabulary and sentence patterns correctly. By the time they reach Year 6, most discuss their work confidently and express their ideas clearly and accurately. Most pupils' English oral skills are developing well.

In the foundation phase, many pupils develop their early reading skills in Welsh effectively. By the end of the foundation phase, many read fluently and recount stories confidently. For example, they explain very clearly the steps that they need to take to make pumpkin soup, and discuss their favourite characters in a story enthusiastically. Many use their phonics skills successfully when reading unfamiliar words. By the end of key stage 2, most pupils read accurately in both languages. They have an understanding that is appropriate for their age and ability, and discuss the main events and characters in their current books confidently. Most use their higher-order reading skills and translanguaging skills successfully, for example to gather information about famous astronauts and to enable them to write accurate portrayals of members of the Welsh rugby team.

Across the school, pupils' progress in their writing skills varies. In the foundation phase, a majority write appropriately and have a suitable understanding of the different purposes of writing. However, they do not write extensively enough across a variety of genres. In key stage 2, most pupils write creatively for a variety of purposes. The standard of many pupils' handwriting and presentation of work is developing appropriately. On the whole, the standard of most pupils' spelling is sound.

Most pupils across the school develop a sound awareness of number, shape, measurement and data handling. Most in the nursery and reception class recognise numbers well and place them in the correct order confidently. In Year 2, most measure the outline of bodies to the nearest centimetre, and more able pupils use centimetres and metres confidently. In key stage 2, many develop a valuable understanding of number facts and use measuring skills correctly. For example, in their science lessons, they measure the height and compare the carbon store of different trees on the school grounds. In Years 5 and 5, most pupils use their number skills very well in order to solve real-life problems, for example when calculating the cost of a trip to Llandudno.

Most pupils apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively across different areas of the curriculum. By the end of the foundation phase, most use electronic tablets effectively. They use simple databases

confidently to record their favourite Welsh songs. Most pupils in key stage 2 demonstrate confident ICT skills, apply them well and select the most suitable methods to present their work. For example, they create a comprehensive database on the features of planets. They also interrogate and organise information confidently to find specific facts to confirm their understanding. Most use passwords safely and purposefully to log in to learning websites to complete their work in the classroom and at home.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Excellent

Nearly all pupils' standards of wellbeing and attitudes to learning are excellent. Nearly all show pride in their school and feel safe within its inclusive and familial ethos. They are happy to discuss any concerns with members of staff and are confident that they are listened to. Most have a very good understanding of how to stay safe online.

Nearly all pupils' behaviour is consistently excellent. They are very polite and treat their peers, staff and visitors with mature respect. Nearly all are caring towards each other, and work and play together very successfully. The familial ethos and empathy towards others are supported very effectively by the 'Cryw Cŵl'. They are extremely vigilant on the playground, and offer immediate support to anyone who looks sad. They are always very proactive in starting conversations in Welsh.

Most pupils have a very sound understanding of how to stay healthy by eating a balanced diet and drinking water regularly. Pupils know how to keep fit and encourage others to do so continuously. For example, the sports ambassadors lead physical literacy sessions confidently, and give staff and pupils feedback on how they can transfer these skills in a variety of contexts.

Most pupils across the school have very positive attitudes to learning. They listen attentively to teachers' instructions and concentrate directly on their work during lessons. Most pupils are enthusiastic learners and are very willing to discuss their work extremely maturely with their peers. They treat the contributions of others with genuine respect and apply themselves confidently to new experiences. This highly successful co-operation is a strong feature and can be seen consistently.

The pupil's voice has permeated aspects of school life very successfully. Pupils select themes and create mind maps for units of work confidently. For example, pupils expand their knowledge and understanding very well by studying the Welsh Rugby theme. Most take great pride in their Welshness and show willingness and enthusiasm towards learning about Welsh culture.

Most pupils across the school often demonstrate their ability to learn independently. They develop their thinking skills and ability to persevere very well, for example by using support circle strategies. Most have an extremely sound understanding of what they need to do to improve their work and succeed in specific tasks. Pupils have a mature awareness of their attainment and the next steps in their learning.

Pupils take full advantage of the very good opportunities that the school provides for them to take responsibility. They undertake their work conscientiously and confidently, and have a very sound understanding of their roles within the school.

Members of the school council and eco council, the digital ambassadors and sports ambassadors make a very beneficial contribution to school life. For example, members of the council have organised a dress-down day to raise money to purchase a variety of new technological equipment, and the eco council have expressed their views clearly in order to improve the school's site.

Most pupils develop a very good understanding of the importance of being moral citizens through their awareness of the values that are promoted by the school and the community. Pupils explain the importance of moral values, such as kindness and co-operation, maturely and intelligently. This prepares them very well to become conscientious and active future citizens.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

There is a highly caring and supportive working relationship across the school. Teachers and assistants work together successfully, support learning very well, and provide pupils with purposeful interventions, where necessary. They emphasise effective values which nurture courtesy, respect and a very orderly learning environment. Teachers have very effective arrangements to manage nearly all pupils' behaviour. As a result, there is a very hard-working relationship between adults and pupils across the school, which enables pupils to learn effectively.

The school provides pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum, which engages most pupils' interest and ensures that the curriculum complies with statutory requirements. The breadth of experiences that are provided across the curriculum provide increasing and purposeful opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills regularly. By setting interesting themes, teachers promote learning and reinforce pupils' knowledge and understanding successfully. They consider pupils' ideas regularly in the process, plan engaging and purposeful lessons rigorously, and tailor activities to meet most pupils' needs.

Staff have a sound awareness of the principles of the foundation phase and provide various activities for pupils, such as sorting plastic resources to reinforce the importance of recycling. As a result, they provide regular opportunities for pupils to learn how to be principled, knowledgeable and respectable citizens who consider the implications of their habits on the environment. The outdoor area is used effectively and creatively, for example in order for pupils to choose different materials to emulate the work of a Welsh artist. However, there are not enough purposeful opportunities for the most able pupils in the foundation phase to develop their writing skills extensively enough across the curriculum.

In key stage 2, the school provides extensive opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in a variety of interesting contexts. For example, it provides valuable opportunities for pupils to collect, analyse and present data by planning a trip to Llandudno. It provides beneficial opportunities for pupils in key stage 2 to take more responsibility for selecting the level of challenge in their tasks. As a result, most pupils develop as enterprising and confident learners.

Teachers share learning objectives and success criteria appropriately with pupils, which enables them to understand clearly what they need to do to succeed in their tasks. They provide regular opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work and

encourage them to discuss the next steps in their learning sensibly. Following constructive oral feedback, pupils are given regular opportunities to act on staff's advice to improve their work. As a result, many pupils have a mature understanding of what they need to do in order to improve the content and presentation of their work. This is beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' standards. Across the school, teachers use effective teaching strategies consistently well. This is beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' standards. Across the school, teachers use effective teaching strategies consistently well. Although this has a positive effect on most pupils' standards and progress, teachers do not always challenge all pupils sufficiently to work to the best of their ability, particularly those who are most able.

Teachers organise a wide variety of stimulating experiences for pupils, including valuable visits by local companies and charities. Educational visits to different locations in the local area are a beneficial prompt for theme work. For example, the visit to Harlech Castle to learn about Owain Glyndŵr prompted pupils to write a mature portrayal of him.

All adults model polished language and encourage pupils to start all conversations in Welsh. As a result, many older pupils have effective translanguaging skills and develop as confident bilingual learners.

Care, support and guidance: Excellent

The school is a happy, hard-working and highly inclusive community. Staff create a homely feel that is reflected in pupils' respectful and courteous behaviour. All members of staff promote pupils' care and wellbeing highly effectively. They have a detailed understanding of individual pupils' needs, and use this understanding very beneficially to support them.

The school succeeds in promoting diversity, anti-racism, fairness and equal opportunities very successfully. Regular visits by members of the community to conduct services and sessions on messages from the Bible contribute exceptionally well to pupils' moral and spiritual development.

The school has highly effective strategies to support pupils' emotional and social learning needs. They do so by working very closely with a number of specialist agencies and by taking advantage of staff's strengths. Strategies and the close relationship between staff and families have a highly positive effect on pupils' standards and wellbeing. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

The school has effective arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily, and staff ensure that pupils receive a valuable variety of exercise sessions regularly.

All staff know the pupils and their families extremely well and have positive relationships with them. This enables them to refer families to specialist support. Teachers use a range of rich information purposefully to track pupils' progress, and to plan and provide additional support for individuals and specific groups. They provide excellent support to ensure that most pupils succeed in their work and make strong progress as they move through the school. The effective range of intervention programmes and strategies that are used enable pupils and groups to make good

progress in their learning. Individual education plans for pupils with additional needs are very effective.

The school provides highly effective opportunities for pupils to shoulder responsibilities through the work of the various councils and ambassadors. This broadens their understanding of effective citizenship and the importance of being active citizens who contribute to their own community regularly.

Teachers and learning assistants work highly effectively as a team and take advantage of every opportunity to enrich pupils' spoken language, which contributes successfully to their good oral skills. They promote the Welsh language and Welshness very successfully. They encourage pupils to learn about local history and legends to stimulate their understanding of their culture and heritage. For example, pupils have written a very interesting and touching monologue about Tecwyn Jones and the great flood in Talsarnau.

Provision to encourage pupils to be creative and imaginative through the arts is very effective. A good example of this is the task that was given for them to emulate the work of Guiseppe Arcimbola to promote healthy eating. Pupils are given numerous and valuable opportunities to develop their musical skills, for example by taking part in 'caneuon actol' (action songs) and performing on stage at the Wales Millennium Centre. Pupils enjoy performing and are successfully in Eisteddfodau and the like.

Leadership and management: Excellent

The headteacher and assistant headteacher lead the school very effectively and ensure that it has a clear strategic direction, which provides a homely and inclusive community for pupils. They have a clear vision that is based on the school motto, "Tyfu, dysgu a chyd-fyw gyda'n gilydd" (Growing, learning and living together), and focus specifically on providing a range of rich learning experiences for pupils in a supportive environment. Both leaders work very effectively with pupils, staff, governors and parents to implement this vision. Promoting the Welsh language and Welshness is a priority and is at the heart of all of the school's work.

The school's self-evaluation procedures are very effective and are at the heart of its life and work. They are based on a wide range of first-hand evidence, which includes tracking pupils' progress and evaluating the quality of provision. As a result, leaders have a thorough and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. There is a clear link between the findings of self-evaluation procedures and the priorities in the development plan. Leaders monitor the plan's main priorities regularly in order to measure the success of activities. As a result, the school has a successful record of ensuring continuous improvement. A typical example of recent success is the improvements in pupils' standards of wellbeing and the care that they receive.

Leaders are very innovative and encourage staff to consider research findings during planning and assessment. As a result, staff work together very closely as a team and fulfil their responsibilities highly conscientiously and effectively. This arrangement succeeds in developing confident leaders at all levels, who implement improvements to raise most pupils' educational standards and wellbeing. Staff have a strong commitment to promoting continuous and sustainable improvements by

coming together to discuss standards and plan jointly regularly. Staff meetings focus specifically on raising standards and progress in the priorities for improvement. This is beginning to have a positive effect on the quality of teaching methods that are used and on standards, particularly the quality of pupils' extended writing in key stage 2.

The school is supported very well by the governors. They also play an active part in comprehensive self-evaluation procedures, which enable them to identify the school's strengths and most areas for improvement effectively. Their practice of monitoring and gathering evidence of the quality of provision and pupils' achievement helps them to form a clear and accurate judgement on the standard of pupils' work and their attainment. As a result, governors' strategic role as critical friends is developing very successfully and enables them to challenge the school about its performance conscientiously and effectively.

The school has robust performance management arrangements, which enable leaders to provide highly effective opportunities to address staff's professional learning needs. Joint training with staff from nearby schools adds very well to the quality of the professional learning activities that are provided. A highly effective example of this the training that they received to enable them to develop intervention plans to meet the needs of pupils with dyslexia. Teachers' commitment to expanding their agreed strategies in relation to assessment for learning, to enable them to give pupils more effective feedback on their work, is another successful example. The strong commitment to developing staff to ensure that the school develops as a very influential learning organisation, where staff learn and develop professionally together, is very effective. As a result, teachers have the confidence to embrace new developments in education enthusiastically. For example, they are keen to learn more about the principles of effective pedagogy as they begin to prepare to introduce the new curriculum for Wales.

Leaders manage resources effectively to enrich the curriculum and raise pupils' standards in all areas. They use the pupil development grant purposefully to raise the standards of the very few pupils who are eligible to receive it. Expenditure is linked appropriately to the priorities in the improvement plan, and funding is monitored carefully by the school and governors to ensure that it has a valuable effect on provision and pupils' standards.

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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