



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

A report on

Ysgol Gwaun Gynfi

**Deiniolen
Gwynedd
LL55 3LT**

Date of inspection: May 2022

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Gwaun Gynfi

Name of provider	Ysgol Gwaun Gyfni
Local authority	Gwynedd
Language of the provider	Welsh-medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	143
Pupils of statutory school age	119
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	10
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 21.3%)</i>	33%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 20.6%)</i>	25%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	60%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/01/2017
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	17/09/2013
Start date of inspection	09/05/2022
Additional information	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different from those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

(a) The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Ysgol Gynradd Gwaun Gynfi is a welcoming and inclusive community that places a high priority on its pupils' well-being. An exceptional feature is the school's dedication to providing a range of nurture groups for the most vulnerable pupils. Despite the challenges the school has faced as a result of the pandemic, the sense of a close-knit community among parents, staff and pupils has meant that it has faced these challenges with obvious resilience.

The school has a strong Welsh ethos with a clear emphasis on providing a range of valuable experiences that reflect the nature and context of the school successfully. The school provides a wide range of experiences to develop pupils' creative skills, which contributes highly effectively to increasing their self-confidence and their ability to work together.

Teachers provide rich and stimulating learning experiences that engage most pupils' interest. This enables them to develop the skills that they need to take advantage of the whole curriculum. On the whole, pupils make sound progress and develop their literacy, numeracy and digital skills successfully, although they do not always apply these skills well enough across the curriculum. They enjoy the opportunities they are given to influence what they would like to learn within the term's theme. However, their role in guiding their own learning and being independent learners has not been developed in full. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is supported well by the deputy headteacher. Governors are supportive and know the school well. They ask challenging questions about decisions when necessary. All staff are dedicated and enthusiastic and work together closely and effectively as a team. They show strong commitment to promoting continuous and sustainable improvements.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen opportunities for pupils to make decisions about their learning and work more independently
- R2 Expand opportunities for pupils to write at length and apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum
- R3 Develop pupils' higher order reading skills and digital data-handling skills further

What happens next

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study, to be disseminated on Estyn's website, on its work in relation to health and well-being provision that has a highly positive effect, especially on the most vulnerable pupils.

Main findings

Learning

During their time at the school, most pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make sound progress in their learning and achieve well. One exceptional feature is the way in which vulnerable pupils thrive and make sound progress. The pandemic has slowed the progress of a minority of pupils, particularly in terms of their higher order reading skills, their extended writing skills and their ability to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Most pupils develop the communication skills that they need to engage successfully with teachers and other pupils in the classroom. Those pupils who do not come from Welsh-speaking homes are quickly regaining their confidence with the language. In the nursery and reception classes, many talk about some of their experiences and share information with increasing confidence. Many speak intelligently and contribute appropriately to class activities. By Year 2, many discuss their work with increasing confidence, for example when investigating and discussing different materials that have come from the sea. Most of the older pupils build well on this firm foundation. Many speak Welsh wholly naturally and use rich language and purposeful vocabulary when discussing their work. They express themselves maturely in Welsh and English, for example when discussing creating a character based on artefacts from the past. Despite the challenges they have faced during the pandemic, most pupils' spoken language skills continue to develop consistently and reach high standards.

Most pupils in the nursery and reception class develop a good understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds and how sounds are combined to form words. By Year 2, many read with increasing fluency and understanding and good development in their phonic skills to detect unfamiliar words. More able pupils read with increasing fluency and confidence in Welsh and English. However, a few are unsure at times when trying to read unfamiliar or polysyllabic words. Most older pupils read accurately with clear and explicit intonation. On the whole, they show a knowledgeable understanding of the context. Most use their reading skills effectively to gather information from various books and texts from appropriate websites. Overall, pupils' higher order reading skills have not developed sufficiently to enable them to interpret and understand meaning effectively when finding information.

As they move through the school, most pupils' writing skills develop well. In the nursery and reception classes, most show enthusiasm towards writing while experimenting with mark making. By Year 2, most form letters correctly and use legible handwriting when writing. Older pupils use their Welsh and English writing skills in a variety of genres. Most use suitable vocabulary and write appropriately for different purposes and various audiences. At the top of the school, they draft and redraft their work effectively, for example when writing imaginative stories. More able pupils use rich vocabulary in both languages and organise their work sensibly by using paragraphs correctly. They produce work of a high standard, for example when writing about the experiences of evacuees during the Second World War. However, there are very few examples of pupils applying their extended writing skills across the curriculum.

Most pupils across the school make sound progress with their mathematics and numeracy. By Year 2, most show a good understanding of number strategies and use them confidently, for example when solving money problems. Most older pupils build appropriately on previous learning. They are increasingly confident when applying these skills, for example as Year 3 pupils solve time problems. At the top of the school, many recall number facts quickly. They are confident when using a wide range of mental calculation and recording methods and apply their skills successfully when comparing prices in local shops. However, pupils do not always work independently enough, for example when choosing the most suitable strategy to solve problems. Only a minority apply their reasoning and enquiry skills consistently enough in subjects across the curriculum.

Many pupils' digital skills develop gradually as they move through the school. By Year 2, many use an electronic tablet effectively to record their work and use a variety of programs with increasing confidence to present information, for example when retelling the story '*Croeso i'r Gragen*'. Most older pupils research confidently, for example for information from different sources about Bernadette's pilgrimage to Lourdes. They use suitable commercial packages to make multimedia presentations of their work, for example when comparing Wales and Ireland. However, across the school, very few pupils develop a good understanding of how to handle data or create spreadsheets to model real-life situations.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils enjoy the school's life and work and feel safe within its caring, inclusive and supportive ethos. They know whom to approach for advice if anything is worrying them and are confident that staff respond to any concerns they may have. Most pupils are welcoming and polite and treat each other and adults with care and respect.

Following the lockdown periods as a result of the pandemic, most pupils have engaged with the school's activities and arrangements consistently well and have shown positive attitudes and behaviour. The few pupils who face challenges in terms of maintaining good behaviour and playing well with their peers are supported effectively and respected by their peers.

A strong feature of the school is the use of a variety of strategies to support pupils' emotional well-being by nurturing resilience and developing their self-respect and social skills. A notable example is the use of pets in the jungle room, including Lili the dog who is an integral part of school life. Pupils learn to respect and care for the animals and this has a positive effect on their ability to control their own emotions at times of anxiety. This has a highly positive effect on the ability of vulnerable pupils to calm down and consider the reasons for their behaviour and its effect on others. This develops their confidence successfully and their ability to interact more effectively with other pupils.

Most pupils show positive attitudes to learning. They settle in the classroom and are ready to work with each other. Many are hardworking and enthusiastic learners who work in harmony and stay on task for extended periods. Most younger pupils show a sound understanding of classroom organisation and move around the various areas confidently and independently. They are always ready to learn and concentrate well.

Many pupils respond well to the opportunities they are given to decide what they would like to learn at the beginning of new topics of study. They enjoy deciding what aspects they would like to know more about, for example as younger pupils learn more about life under the sea. This engages them and motivates them to learn successfully. A good example of this is the work of older pupils when researching the Titanic disaster and discussing the best way to draw faces when emulating the methods of famous artists. However, overall, the role of pupils in guiding their own learning, making decisions about their learning and becoming independent learners has not been developed in full.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of eating and drinking healthily and understand the effect of exercise on their health. They participate enthusiastically in a range of physical activities, including running or walking a mile a day at school and joining sports clubs after school and in the community. This has a positive effect on their well-being and fitness. Most pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of staying safe at school and beyond, including their use of the internet.

They are proud of their contribution to fundraising activities, for example by raising money to help people from Ukraine. This has a positive effect on most pupils' awareness of the needs of others in their community and the wider world and contributes well to their moral development.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not be reporting on pupil attendance rates during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years. However, inspectors will consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

Staff develop a close working relationship with pupils, which fosters a positive and supportive environment for learning. They know the pupils well, encourage them to participate and praise their efforts while they are working and interacting with their peers frequently. This has a positive effect on pupils' standards and well-being.

Staff work together productively to create an engaging curriculum that challenges pupils and sparks their enthusiasm. There are suitable arrangements in place to reform the curriculum based on the four purposes to meet the principles of the Curriculum for Wales. Teachers plan thoughtfully for learning experiences that reflect the school's context and ethos and encourage all pupils to broaden their understanding of the world around them and be ambitious for their future.

Provision to develop the Welsh language and Welsh dimension is one of the school's strengths and encourages most pupils to make full use of the Welsh language in all aspects of their work. All members of staff take advantage of every opportunity to enrich pupils' language, which contributes successfully to their oral skills. As a result, many older pupils have sound translanguaging skills and develop as competent and confident bilingual learners. There is a clear emphasis on developing a curriculum that is based on Wales and reflects the nature and context of the school successfully. For example, through the Slate project, beneficial opportunities were provided for pupils to work with the National Slate Museum in Llanberis to improve their literacy

skills, creative skills and wider skills. By walking along the old paths and contributing skilfully to the fifty-year anniversary of the community newspaper, they broaden their understanding of their local area, their history and their culture. As a result, pupils take pride in their heritage and their Welshness. Teachers also provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge of the wider world. A good example of this is the work of older pupils on the experience of evacuees during the Second World War and researching information about the recent disaster in Ukraine.

The principles of the foundation phase are based firmly on developing pupils' skills by providing them with practical and stimulating experiences. All staff create attractive and engaging learning areas and provide a range of rich learning experiences that meet most pupils' needs effectively. They present interesting cross-curricular themes and work programmes that extend most pupils' knowledge and understanding and strengthen their commitment to their work effectively. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this knowledge skilfully to plan appealing learning experiences for pupils that meet most of their needs effectively. Overall, they link their lessons skilfully to ensure suitable opportunities for pupils to build on previous learning. They use a variety of purposeful teaching methods, which motivate most pupils to learn successfully. Productive co-operation between teachers and assistants provides beneficial support and, as a result, most pupils make sound progress. Overall, there is a good balance between experiences that are led by adults and opportunities for pupils to work independently. However, there is a tendency at time for teachers to guide activities too much, and this limits opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.

Staff make appropriate use of the outdoor area to support learning. Younger pupils are given frequent and interesting opportunities to develop and apply their literacy, numeracy and creative skills purposefully, for example by making bottles of coloured sand to sell in the aquarium. Teachers provide an annual trip to the Urdd residential centre at Glan Llyn for older pupils and, as a result, pupils develop their social, physical and creative skills effectively.

Teachers plan comprehensive activities to support the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital skills purposefully. However, opportunities for pupils to apply their extended writing skills, numeracy skills and develop their digital data-handling skills across the curriculum are limited.

Formative assessment strategies are operational across the school. In most classes, teachers give their pupils purposeful oral feedback and intervene thoughtfully to support them at appropriate times during the lesson and encourage them to persevere. In the best practice, teachers encourage them to check their progress against the success criteria and to reflect further on how to improve their work. Many pupils in these classes discuss confidently ways to improve their work. However, practice is not consistent across the school. Only a minority of pupils know how to improve their own work independently.

Care, support and guidance

Staff create a safe, happy and caring community that succeeds in nurturing pupils' personal and social skills successfully. They provide an inclusive, supportive and

safe ethos, which has a positive effect on pupils' well-being and enthusiasm towards learning.

A notable aspect of the school is the way that it prioritises supporting pupils' mental health and well-being. Staff know the pupils well and respond sensitively to their needs. They strengthen their understanding of pupils' emotional needs and behaviour by using specific profiles or questionnaires skilfully. This contributes effectively towards ensuring robust support for pupils by improving pupils' emotional and social aspects and setting realistic and achievable targets for them. This is reinforced highly effectively by providing appealing opportunities for pupils to care for pets at school. This develops their self-confidence and social skills, in addition to their ability to control their emotions, highly effectively.

Vulnerable pupils attended school throughout the lockdown periods during the pandemic and frequent 'drop-in' sessions were also held with them and their families. As the school re-opened, an opportunity was provided for pupils to attend sessions that urged them to express their emotions through drama. This has a positive effect on developing aspects of their well-being and oracy skills. Vulnerable pupils in the reception class and Years 1 and 2 attend '*Hafan*' in the mornings. Here, staff support them to develop their personal and social skills. This has a positive effect on their ability to identify and manage their feelings, their skills in working and playing together, in addition to their oracy and expressive language.

Staff provide a wide range of intervention groups that succeed in improving the skills of pupils with additional learning needs effectively. They contribute successfully towards increasing confidence and reducing concerns and succeed in developing resilience and a positive self-image among pupils across the school. The school's commitment to providing jointly with external agencies provides valuable opportunities for pupils to improve aspects of their well-being, in addition to relevant training for staff, which has strengthened provision. As a result, many of the most vulnerable pupils and those with learning needs are more eager to come to school, more willing to respond to staff and participate in school activities while aiming to achieve their improvement targets.

There are effective systems to track and monitor pupils' progress, and arrangements for identifying and responding to the needs of specific pupils are rigorous. Teachers create useful one-page profiles for all pupils with additional learning needs, in addition to good quality individual education plans. These include specific targets for improvement that help staff to monitor pupils' progress effectively. Teachers review these plans regularly with parents and their children, alongside relevant agencies, to plan appropriately for the next steps in their learning.

The school promotes pupils' social, moral and spiritual skills effectively during collective worship sessions and class lessons. Regular worship assemblies are held, which provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to reflect on important religious aspects, such as honesty and kindness towards others. Although opportunities to shoulder responsibilities through pupil voice groups, such as the school council, have been restricted due to the pandemic, pupils respond enthusiastically to the opportunities that are provided for them.

There is a clear emphasis on developing pupils' creative and expressive skills. Teachers organise regular opportunities for performers, artists, poets and musicians to work with pupils. A good example of this is the work of pupils in the nursery and reception classes with a local performer to create a number of songs and nursery rhymes and record them in a booklet and on a compact disc to be shared with parents. This has a positive effect on developing pupils' oral skills in addition to their confidence and ability to work together. Across the school, pupils respond enthusiastically to regular opportunities to work creatively with a variety of materials. An impressive example of this is the work of older pupils with a local artist to create a mural on the equipment store on the playground.

Staff promote the importance of eating healthily and encourage physical fitness through a range of physical education lessons and fitness activities, such as running or walking a mile and sports clubs after school and in the community. This, in addition to projects such as '*Y Bocs Bwyd Anhygoel*' ('The Amazing Lunchbox') and research on the heart, promote pupils' understanding of how to make healthy lifestyle choices and the importance of keeping fit successfully.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote good attendance. This includes daily monitoring and maintaining close links with parents, in addition to the local authority's attendance officers. The school addresses persistent absence consistently.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. All staff are aware of the child protection arrangements and conduct detailed risk assessments within the school's activities and before going on external trips. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides robust leadership that ensures a clear strategic direction for the development of the school and a culture that promotes continuous improvement. The vision of '*Dysgu ynghyd, llwyddo'n y byd ac agor drws i'r dyfodol*' ('Learning together, succeeding in the world and opening the door to the future') and developing healthy and confident pupils in a happy and welcoming community has been shared successfully. The headteacher embraces this vision firmly and conveys it effectively to all staff, pupils, governors and parents. She is supported strongly by the deputy headteacher. Both are passionate about the community they serve. Despite the challenges the school has faced as a result of the pandemic, leaders promote a sense of a close-knit community among parents, staff and pupils. One of the school's strengths is the clear emphasis on well-being strategies by establishing nurture groups for the most vulnerable pupils. Leaders have identified these pupils and, by developing a close link with parents and external agencies, have developed very supportive provision for them, such as '*Hafan*' and '*Hwb*'.

Leaders have high expectations of themselves, staff and pupils and, as a result, a caring, hard-working and Welsh ethos permeates all of the school's activities. The teamwork that exists within the school is a strength and ensures that everyone contributes effectively to realising this vision successfully. There is a strong focus on providing a variety of experiences to develop the Welsh language and Welsh dimension. As a result, pupils value the culture and history of their local area greatly.

A good example of this is the school's commitment to developing artistic projects on the theme 'Slate' by working with local artists, in addition to mentoring a local school by guiding it through the project.

All members of staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and fulfil them effectively and conscientiously. They meet regularly to discuss, plan and track pupils' progress. Effective performance management arrangements, which are linked to the school's priorities, provide good opportunities to promote staff's professional development.

Leaders have a sound understanding of strengths and areas for development. They make effective use of first-hand evidence on the quality of teaching and learning to monitor pupils' progress. Self-evaluation procedures take regular account of the views of pupils and parents on aspects of school life. Leaders use self-evaluation findings skilfully to set purposeful priorities to improve provision and raise standards. For example, when evaluating the effect of the pandemic on pupils' skills, a decline was seen in pupils' oral skills. As a result, leaders have committed to a regional project that targets oral skills. The headteacher and teachers monitor progress carefully and submit rigorous reports to the governors, which show where further improvement is needed.

The school is working well to address national and local priorities. This includes the Curriculum for Wales, reforming provision for additional learning needs and post-pandemic recovery. There is a strong sense among all staff of a shared strategic direction and responsibility for achieving these priorities. Leaders act purposefully to reduce the effects of poverty on pupils' progress, particularly as the number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals has increased during the pandemic. They use funding purposefully to target pupils effectively.

The school establishes productive relationships with parents. Purposeful communication methods ensure that parents are able to raise any issues that may affect their child's learning and well-being in a timely manner. During the lockdown periods, valuable support was provided for pupils by joining live lessons and developing better links between the school and learners. Following their experiences during the lockdown periods, the school identified the need to improve the quality of presentations by providing step-by-step guidance and modelling learning for pupils and parents. As a result, pupils and parents had a better understanding of the requirements of tasks, which led to a higher level of engagement and better quality work.

The governing body is dedicated and supportive of the school. It has a sound understanding of the school's priorities and the rationale behind them. Governors are aware of the effects of the pandemic's restrictions, particularly on pupils' oracy, numeracy and writing skills. They have a good awareness of the school's progress and improvement needs. The governors' strategic role as critical friends is developing successfully and enables them to challenge the school about its performance effectively. They ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily.

Leaders manage funding prudently. The headteacher and governors use resources effectively to enrich provision. They link expenditure appropriately with the school's

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priorities and monitor funding carefully to ensure the best use of it. They use additional funding sensibly, in addition to a variety of purposeful grants, to have a positive effect on improving pupils' well-being and skills. A good example of this is the large number of assistants who are employed to lead support programmes to support the well-being of vulnerable pupils.

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/members of the management committee 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, middle leaders, and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of lessons, including learning support groups and the specialist resource base (where appropriate), and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups (where appropriate) and in outdoor areas
- visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning (where appropriate)
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>)

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

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

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