



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

A report on

Ysgol Y Garreg

**Llanfrothen
Penrhyndeudraeth
Gwynedd
LL48 6LJ**

Date of inspection: January 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Y Garreg

Name of provider	Ysgol Y Garreg
Local authority	Cyngor Gwynedd
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	19
Pupils of statutory school age	16
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 23.0%)</i>	19.2%
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 16.1%)</i>	21.0%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	31.3%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	04/01/2013
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	07/10/2014
Start date of inspection	30/01/2023

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

This is a homely and inclusive school that promotes pupils' Welshness and well-being effectively. Staff have a good understanding of pupils' needs and provide them with robust care and guidance. Teachers provide a wide range of stimulating and engaging experiences that engage pupils' interest effectively. However, at times, teachers have a tendency to over-direct learning and the level of challenge is not always suitable to meet the needs of all pupils.

Pupils' behaviour is robustly good and they show a high level of motivation and interest in their work. They are very willing to contribute their ideas and discuss their views maturely with their peers. They treat each other and staff with respect and are willing to support others when necessary. As a result, nearly all pupils take ownership of their learning and make sound progress in their skills over time. They take pride in the opportunities they are given to contribute to what they would like to learn within their termly themes. However, pupils are not always given opportunities to play a prominent part in decisions that affect them across the school.

The headteacher provides the school with clear strategic leadership. She works closely with governors and staff, who support her effectively to set priorities for improvement. They have a sound understanding of the school's main strengths and areas for improvement. Together, they work diligently to move teaching and learning forwards effectively.

Recommendations

- R1 Ensure an appropriate level of challenge to support pupils to develop their skills to the best of their ability
- R2 Provide opportunities for pupils to undertake leadership roles to contribute to the work and wider life of the school

What happens next

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

Main findings

Learning

On entry to the school, most pupils basic skills are appropriate for their age. During their time at the school, most pupils make sound progress in their learning and produce work of a high standard.

In the school's lower years, most pupils communicate clearly and comfortably in Welsh. They use a suitable range of vocabulary that is appropriate for their age and ability. They discuss confidently in the learning areas and talk confidently about their experiences and interests. Most pupils listen attentively to instructions from staff and each other's contributions.

Most of the youngest pupils recognise sounds and letters and build a sound understanding of basic vocabulary. This enables them to read suitable texts confidently. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are able to discuss text meaningfully and sensibly and refer to events and characters within the books they read.

The early writing skills of many of the youngest pupils are developing soundly. They write by using simple sentence structures and include punctuation that is suitable for the text. Many pupils use verbs and adjectives intelligently to enrich text, for example when writing a poem about the senses of Christmas.

By the end of Year 2, most pupils use simple number strategies correctly. They have a good understanding of numbers up to 100 and succeed in adding and subtracting 2-digit numbers correctly. Many pupils complete tables and graphs confidently, for example to show data on their peers' birthdays. They succeed in applying their number skills across the curriculum, for example by creating repeating patterns as part of their work in the forest school.

The digital skills of the school's youngest pupils are developing well. They use a range of software and apps confidently to develop their fine motor skills and their literacy and numeracy skills. As part of their theme '*Gofalu am y Byd*' ('Caring for the World'), they control a programmable toy skilfully as it explores the depths of the ocean.

As they move through the school, many pupils communicate skilfully in lessons and activities in both languages. Most of the older pupils use rich vocabulary when discussing formally and informally in various situations. They are willing to express their views and support them with valid reasoning. Most pupils adapt their spoken language effectively for various audiences, for example when writing scripts and performing a play as part of their theme on Joseph and his Technicolour Coat.

In the school's upper years, many pupils read with increasing confidence. They read a variety of texts and pronounce unfamiliar words correctly most of the time. They discuss books effectively, refer to the content and describe the main characters. They are able to gather information from different sources to enrich their work, for example by finding information about how to stay healthy.

Older pupils write intelligently for different purposes in both languages. Most pupils' handwriting is neat and they show respect when recording their work in their books. They have a sound understanding of the features of different genres of writing. They

organise their work into sensible paragraphs and use a good range of punctuation. They use varied syntax confidently and use adjectives and descriptions with increasing accuracy to enrich the text. Pupils apply their writing skills successfully across different areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils write a comprehensive biography of Greta Thunberg as part of their work on protecting the environment.

In the school's upper years, most pupils' number skills are developing well. They have a sound grasp of number work and simplify fractions and use decimals confidently. They have a sound grasp of interpreting data and a good understanding of shape and space, for example when finding the area and perimeter of standard and non-standard shapes. Many pupils succeed in applying their number skills across the curriculum, for example when gathering information and analysing an experiment on heart rate.

Most of the older pupils show positive development in their digital skills. They use the internet confidently to search for information and create multimedia presentations successfully to present their findings, for example to promote the importance of using sustainable palm oil.

Nearly all pupils' creative skills are developing skilfully. For example, in the school's lower years, they enjoy performing plays on the stage in the outdoor area. This is effective in developing their self-confidence and spoken Welsh skills. As part of activities for the Urdd Eisteddfod, older pupils enjoy using a range of equipment and materials to create attractive artwork that is displayed across the school.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils enjoy the school's life and work and feel safe within a supportive and inclusive learning community. They show pride in their school and develop as confident and creative learners. Provision to develop pupils' well-being is at the heart of the school's vision. Older pupils take care of the younger ones naturally and maturely. Pupils are polite and thoughtful. They behave very well and treat their peers and visitors with respect and care. This is a strong feature of the school.

Most pupils show positive attitudes towards their learning and develop as hard-working and enthusiastic learners. They work together effectively and stay diligently on task over extended periods. They listen attentively to presentations and work well consistently as individuals, in pairs and small groups. Many older pupils use specific thinking techniques effectively when facing challenges in their work. This enables them to persevere and solve problems effectively. Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes towards keeping healthy. They show enjoyment when taking part in physical activities, including stimulating playground games during break times. Through their themes, nearly all pupils have a mature understanding of the importance of eating and drinking healthily.

Most pupils respond positively to the opportunities they are given to influence what they would like to learn within their termly themes. This strengthens their commitment to their work effectively. As a result, they demonstrate good levels of motivation and interest in their work. Most of the school's older pupils are aware of their personal targets and what they need to do to improve their work.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of their responsibilities as global, ethical and knowledgeable citizens. They have a strong sense of fairness and equality. For

example, pupils decided to raise money to build a clear water well for residents in a poor country. Money was also raised to sponsor the education of a child in Nigeria.

Pupils enjoy taking part in enterprise activities every year. For example, they have recently worked effectively with a member of the community to create a business by designing, creating and selling jewellery to parents and residents in the area. Through these rich opportunities, pupils develop their creative and problem-solving skills effectively.

Pupils have recently begun to contribute to a few elements of the school's work through the school council, for example by deciding what prize they should receive after gaining language reward tokens. However, pupils do not currently play a prominent enough role in making decisions about the wider provision offered by the school.

Teaching and learning experiences

There is a very close and supportive working relationship between staff and pupils. This relationship is one of the school's strengths. Teachers foster an inclusive learning environment. As a result, the behaviour and attitudes of nearly all pupils towards their learning are positive. Pupils are polite and treat adults and visitors with respect.

Staff work together purposefully to deliver a stimulating and interesting curriculum that meets the needs of the Curriculum for Wales effectively. They plan thoroughly to provide beneficial experiences that encompass all of the areas of learning and experience. Within their termly theme, the school's younger pupils are given valuable opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and a range of skills through educational activities in the forest area. For example, they create art by using a range of natural materials. They are given beneficial opportunities to develop their oral Welsh skills by working with their peers. In the upper years, staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills purposefully. For example, as part of their weekly challenges, pupils are given rich opportunities to write for different purposes. This includes a formal letter to the Minister for Climate Change to express their concern about carbon levels in the environment. Teachers ensure that pupils are given purposeful opportunities to develop their numeracy and digital skills regularly within the weekly challenges.

Staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to be involved in the process of setting the direction of their learning. The planning walls in all classrooms prompt pupils to contribute their ideas about what they would like to discover within their termly themes. As a result, most pupils take ownership of the themes and apply themselves to their tasks enthusiastically.

The standard of teaching is consistently good. Teachers have sound knowledge across different areas of the curriculum. They are effective language models and encourage pupils to improve their oral Welsh skills regularly. Teachers use a range of probing questioning methods that are effective in recalling previous learning and informing the direction of learning purposefully. They offer constructive feedback, which supports pupils to reflect on their tasks and improve their work confidently. They provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to work independently, in pairs and in small groups. However, at times, adults over-direct learning and the level of challenge is not always suitable to meet the needs of all pupils.

Lower down the school, the teacher plans stimulating opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in the outdoor areas. For example, pupils take advantage of purposeful opportunities to develop their oracy and numeracy skills by creating patterns by using natural and man-made materials. Staff also plan activities in the local area to instil pupils' pride in their community. A good example of this is the pupils' contribution to the Spring Clean Cymru campaign, where they went litter picking around Llanfrothen.

Teachers plan stimulating educational visits to enrich and reinforce classroom learning. For example, as part of the theme on the Celts, all of the school's pupils visited the Celtic Roundhouses at Melin Llynon. They have also benefitted from trips to different residential centres. Through these visits, pupils are given rich opportunities to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the history, culture and heritage of Wales.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring and familial community that provides pupils with robust care, support and guidance. The supportive and friendly working relationship between staff and pupils is a particular feature of the school. This is reflected in the good behaviour and courtesy of nearly all pupils and their positive attitudes to learning and towards their school.

The school has effective techniques to respond to the mental health and social concerns of pupils. The use of cuddly toys, calm corners and weekly circle time sessions are effective in ensuring that all pupils are given an opportunity to discuss what is worrying them. The school provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop their physical skills. Through weekly physical education sessions and the playground games and resources that are provided for pupils during break times, pupils develop their throwing and catching skills effectively.

Leaders have robust procedures to identify and monitor any pupils with additional learning needs at an early stage. Staff work with parents to create appropriate plans to support the development of these pupils' skills. Assistants support pupils' individual needs effectively to ensure that they make sound progress in their learning. However, at times, tasks that are planned in lessons do not always respond appropriately to the needs of all pupils.

A number of rich events and visits are provided for pupils, which promotes their understanding of their culture and community successfully. For example, as part of the theme '*O Dan ein Traed*' ('Beneath our Feet'), teachers organise beneficial opportunities for pupils to visit local historical places, including the Celtic Roundhouses at Melin Llynon and Llanfair quarry. Provision to develop pupils' creative and expressive skills is effective. The recent art workshop, in which pupils were given opportunities to work with a local artist to print and make bags, is a good example of this.

The school's curriculum ensures purposeful opportunities for pupils to foster a sound understanding of the importance of sustainability. For example, as part of their themes, pupils develop their understanding of renewable energy and the effect of our carbon footprint on the climate. As part of this work, teachers provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to learn about the work of different charities. For example, they raise awareness of the support given by the Red Cross to people who are

suffering as a result of disasters around the world. This is effective in raising pupils' understanding of the importance of being caring and conscientious citizens.

Staff provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to voice their opinions about what they would like to learn within their termly themes. However, staff do not provide opportunities regularly enough for pupils to express their views about the school's wider issues. As a result, pupils are not given purposeful opportunities to develop their role as leaders.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern. Staff have a sound awareness of safeguarding processes and leaders respond appropriately to any individual cases, working effectively with other agencies where appropriate. Staff provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the importance of online safety and road safety. The school's procedures for ensuring regular attendance among pupils are sound. Staff keep a record of any absences and contact parents in a timely manner to discuss any concerns about their children's attendance.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a robust vision that is based on ensuring that all pupils develop to become confident and happy bilingual citizens who play a full part in society.

The school has a homely feel. The headteacher is supported effectively by a small team of staff who work together effectively to ensure continuous improvement. All staff work together diligently to ensure that the school has a robust culture of safeguarding.

The headteacher has high expectations of staff and pupils. Pupils are expected to show respect and positive attitude towards their learning. There are clear performance management procedures in place for staff. They have suitable improvement targets based on the priorities in the development plans and that are personal to their individual development needs. Staff are given regular opportunities to attend training that meets the requirements of their professional development. They work closely with staff from schools in the cluster to share expertise, for example by working together effectively to raise the standard of pupils' spoken Welsh and Welsh reading following the pandemic. They have recently attended purposeful training, which has developed their skills in planning for the Curriculum for Wales successfully.

The school's self-evaluation processes are sound. The headteacher and staff observe each other's lessons regularly and provide constructive feedback on what works well and what needs to be improved in lessons. They scrutinise pupils' work on a termly basis and place a firm focus on the standard of pupils' work and improving provision. The headteacher holds beneficial discussions with staff each term. Together, they identify the priorities to be included in the improvement plan successfully and evaluate them in a timely manner, adapting provision where necessary.

The governing body meets each term and holds beneficial discussions about the school's priorities and evaluates the effect of any activity in the development plan. Members of the governing body visit the school regularly, scrutinise work and hold meetings with pupils and staff. As a result, the governing body has a sound

understanding of the school's main strengths and areas for improvement. They report their findings to the full body and challenge, where appropriate. They take advantage of opportunities to promote healthy eating and drinking, for example by encouraging pupils to drink water and eat fruit during the day.

One of the strong features of the school is the close and constructive relationship with parents and the local community. The headteacher includes parents' views when making strategic decisions about provision that is offered to pupils. Parents are given suitable opportunities to influence the school's work. For example, they completed a questionnaire recently to suggest ideas about the content of the school's curriculum. The school makes good use of the community to expand provision and the opportunities that are available to pupils. As part of the enterprise projects, pupils are given opportunities to work with local businesses. This is effective in developing their understanding of the role and importance of small businesses in a rural community.

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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