



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

A report on

Ysgol y Gorlan

**Tremadog
Porthmadog
Gwynedd
LL49 9RN**

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 Gorlan

Name of provider	Ysgol y Gorlan
Local authority	Cyngor Gwynedd
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	113
Pupils of statutory school age	84
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	14
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>	10.7%
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>	16.7%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	73.8%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/04/2014
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	13/05/2014
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

Ysgol y Gorlan is a happy, caring and family community. One of the school's most effective features is that staff support the emotional well-being of all pupils and provide them with a well-rounded education successfully. They work together effectively to provide a friendly and inclusive ethos where pupils behave politely and respectfully. Nearly all pupils treat their peers, staff and visitors with care. Most pupils show a positive attitude to learning and make sound progress from their starting points.

Most pupils have a say in school life and work effectively with each other and adults when planning rich learning experiences. They make sound progress during lessons and activities that inspire them to do their best. However, pupils do not develop their extended numeracy skills as they move through the school. Pupils across the school develop their digital and creative skills well and older pupils develop a sound understanding of the culture, history and geography of their local area or '*cynefin*'.

The school's creative vision is to develop the curriculum and the sound emphasis on shared values supports teachers and staff to provide a rich range of interesting learning experiences. This engages and maintains pupils' enthusiasm and meets their needs successfully. The school's provision for the use of the Welsh language is an obvious strength. However, teachers' feedback does not always provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on their work and make increasingly challenging improvements to their learning.

The headteacher and leaders share a clear vision to provide a well-rounded education based on supporting pupils' well-being and working together for the future. They focus well on ensuring that all staff feel that they are part of the school team. This ensures that everyone understands the school's priorities and work together supportively. However, the school's self-evaluation and planning for improvement arrangements are not effective enough to identify its strengths and areas for improvement. Most governors work well with leaders to support staff and the headteacher on day-to-day arrangements. However, members of the governing body are not involved effectively enough in the school's strategic planning to drive the changes that are needed.

Recommendations

- R1 Provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum.
- R2 Provide specific feedback for pupils to extend their work to the best of their ability.
- R3 Ensure self-evaluation and planning arrangements so that the school can identify its strengths and areas for improvement.
- R4 Ensure that governors are involved in the school's strategic planning to drive the changes that are needed.

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 nursery class, many pupils' skills are at the level expected for their age. During their time at the school, most pupils make sound progress. Pupils who have been identified as having additional learning needs and those who are vulnerable persevere confidently and develop increasing confidence in their learning activities.

Across the school, most pupils listen attentively to each other and adults. Most pupils' oral skills are very strong across the school. By Year 1, most converse confidently in Welsh, for example while role-playing in the pet shop. They use mature vocabulary when discussing their peers' favourite pets or when role-playing as the vet. As pupils move through the school, most develop their oral skills effectively in both languages. By Year 6, most pupils express their views clearly and with accuracy, for example when discussing the effect of the marketing of energy drinks on children and young people. Nearly all pupils show pride in speaking their natural Welsh language.

Most pupils' reading skills develop appropriately as they move through the school. Most nursery and reception pupils recognise and name a range of sounds and use this knowledge to begin to read simple words, for example when discussing the story of the "Dyn Bach Toes" (Gingerbread Man). As pupils move through the school, they build on this progress and develop a good range of techniques to become robust readers. By Year 6, many pupils read a range of appropriate texts in both languages and apply their reading skills, including digital texts effectively, for example by completing reading comprehension on footballers during the World Cup to create a fact file about them.

Many pupils' writing skills are developing well. Pupils in the nursery and reception classes begin to practise their early writing skills by mark making in different media and by beginning to write individuals letters and simple words to convey meaning. By Year 1, many use adjectives and similes with increasing accuracy, for example when describing the features of a giraffe. At the top of the school, many develop their skills suitably and begin to vary their vocabulary and sentence patterns when writing. They develop their relevant knowledge of the correct use of the Welsh language by following a consistent structure in regular activities. They use this knowledge in a range of appropriate writing genres, for example as they use extensive vocabulary when presenting an argument for and against releasing balloons to celebrate the opening of a supermarket.

From an early age, most pupils' mathematics skills develop firmly. The youngest pupils acquire basic mathematics skills appropriately, for example by identifying a variety of familiar shapes and counting objects up to 10. By Year 1, most have a thorough understanding of mathematical features and use them confidently in their learning and play experiences, for example by measuring the length of an African snail by using standard units. A minority of pupils in the middle of the school build on their numeracy skills with increasing confidence in their mathematics lessons and, at times, to support their learning across the curriculum. The majority of pupils at the top of the school show a sound understanding of mathematical terms. They have a suitable understanding of mathematical features, including addition, subtraction,

multiplication and division. They gather, present and interpret information intelligently in the form of line graphs, tables and spreadsheets. On the whole, a majority of pupils across the school do not make consistent progress in developing their numeracy skills across the areas of learning.

Most pupils' physical skills are developing well. The youngest pupils practise their skills regularly by making good use of construction equipment or using the balance bikes skilfully. Pupils in the middle and at the top of the school develop very beneficial physical skills. For example, they take part in a variety of lessons that promote their health and well-being, such as yoga and rugby sessions, and take part in swimming lessons and play team games with the Urdd.

Across the school, many pupils' creative skills are developing soundly and there are valuable opportunities for them to create artwork and music, in addition to performing for different audiences.

Most pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills develop effectively as they move through the school. They combine their skills and understanding of different apps and computer programs with increasing confidence to enrich their work. Most pupils in the reception class give a digital toy a series of correct instructions and, by Year 2, most use a digital tablet confidently to record their work and develop their oral skills. Most older pupils log in to their personal digital accounts confidently and use a variety of suitable programs to gather and present information, for example when telling the story of Owain Glyndŵr. By the time they reach the top of the school, many pupils use a range of digital programs creatively, for example by using a green screen to create and present a video to re-tell part of a fictional English story. This has a positive effect on developing their oral skills in both languages.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils demonstrate pride and respect towards their school. They are very welcoming and extremely polite towards their peers, staff and visitors. They appreciate the care, experiences and education they receive within a warm, inclusive learning environment.

Nearly all pupils behave very well both inside and outside the classroom and are caring towards each other when working and playing together happily.

Most pupils show positive attitudes to learning. They are enthusiastic learners who undertake classroom activities enthusiastically and give tasks a try independently, understanding that they are allowed to make mistakes and that it is an important part of the learning process. They work with their peers in pairs or groups to solve problems without support from staff, for example by asking for support from their peers before their teachers. Most pupils show an interest in their work and are willing to persevere to succeed. By doing so, they concentrate successfully for extended periods and discuss their work confidently. Most pupils across the school undertake activities in the learning and play areas independently and are willing to listen meaningfully to the views and ideas of others. For example, when discussing in their areas, they compare two different versions of the song *Dwylo Dros y Môr*.

Nearly all pupils feel safe at school and are confident that staff respond immediately to any concerns they may have. Pupils are happy to discuss any concerns with

members of staff and are confident to listen to them. Using the Digital Den in the classrooms, they have a sound awareness of how to stay safe online. As a result of the school council's healthy eating campaign, nearly all pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of healthy eating and drinking and regular exercise. They take pride in the opportunities they are given to improve their fitness in physical education lessons and fitness activities. For example, pupils across the school take part in beneficial fitness sessions by using the 'track', which is a trail that has been created deliberately around the school to promote physical skills.

Across the school, most pupils suggest ideas to be included in their themes and plan purposeful learning activities jointly with their teachers. They appreciate that teachers listen to their views in the classroom and include their ideas when planning. As a result, they show interest and enthusiasm and persevere when pursuing different learning pathways.

Through their awareness of the values that are promoted by the school, most pupils have a good understanding of the importance of moral and Welsh citizenship. Nearly all pupils understand the importance of supporting other people in society and are keen to raise money for local and national charities. For example, they have raised money for the Welsh Air Ambulance and for the poorest children in eastern Europe.

Members of the school council are proud of their roles and take their duties seriously. They plan diligently to improve the school and ensure that they have a prominent voice. For example, the school council has challenged the local authority to reintroduce pupils' choices on the lunch menu. It has also organised a second-hand clothing exchange day for the school's families. This develops pupils to become moral and knowledgeable citizens and increases their awareness of the importance of their contributions to create a caring society.

Teaching and learning experiences

Across the school, learning experiences promote authentic contexts and have a positive effect on the quality of the curriculum. Teachers work well with parents and pupils to plan engaging themes that inspire and ensure the commitment of all pupils.

Overall, teachers are beginning to adapt their planning appropriately to consider the four purposes and the areas of learning and experience, in line with the Curriculum for Wales. The wider principles of the curriculum are developing appropriately by nurturing pupils to be ambitious, enterprising learners and to persevere in their activities. Teachers plan effectively to develop pupils' thinking, reading, oral, ICT and writing skills and, as a result, they use them confidently across the curriculum. However, planning to develop numeracy skills is not consistent enough across the areas of learning. As a result, this hinders pupils' ability to use their mathematics skills for different purposes.

All members of staff work hard to forge an inclusive and hard-working relationship with pupils. As a result, the learning environment is supportive and stimulating, which develops pupils' enthusiasm towards their learning.

Both indoors and outdoors, the attractive learning areas are used purposefully to encourage pupils to work productively and to enrich their experiences. Staff succeed in ensuring that the classes are stimulating and engaging places. Interactive and colourful displays in the classrooms and corridors support learning purposefully.

Across the school, planning work for specific areas provides opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and knowledge effectively in purposeful contexts. For example, the pupils' '*cynefin*' is given prominent attention, such as the Year 5 and 6 studies into the history of William Maddocks and the founding of Tremadog many years ago.

All members of staff have a highly positive working relationship with pupils. They work together as effective team members and provide a wide range of activities that support pupils to make progress in their key skills and social skills. Teachers and assistants care conscientiously and loyally for their pupils. This reinforces the strong sense among pupils that the school is a happy and homely place. Teachers and support staff have high expectations in terms of behaviour. All staff work together effectively and motivate and manage pupils' behaviour skilfully. They use praise and encouragement appropriately, and this creates a hard-working learning environment.

Teachers and learning assistants provide pupils with constructive feedback and support so that they understand how to improve their work, particularly verbally. Teachers share learning objectives and success criteria with pupils appropriately. Assistants support learning successfully by leading activities with individuals and groups of children. Overall, teachers' assessments are appropriate, valid and accurate. However, teachers do not always provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on their work and make adaptations following feedback. As a result, pupils do not always improve their work to the best of their ability.

The school's strong Welsh ethos and provision encourage pupils to make purposeful use of the Welsh language. As a result, they develop as competent bilingual learners. Staff work together enthusiastically and passionately to immerse pupils in the Welsh language. They model language masterfully, show enthusiasm towards the language and have high expectations in terms of pupils' standards of oracy. They use songs and sign language very effectively as a key part of their teaching methods. This enables most pupils to make good progress in acquiring the language and using it in different contexts.

Care, support and guidance

The school has a caring, inclusive, and family ethos where everyone is respected and valued. Teachers and assistants know the pupils well and respond extensively to their emotional and social needs.

The positive atmosphere and staff's positive attitudes across the school support pupils to foster a positive attitude towards learning and develop their skills to work independently beneficially. All staff foster shared values, such as care, kindness, fairness and respect, particularly well. This is highlighted in the positive attitude and behaviour of pupils around the school. The school has a strong culture of safeguarding and arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

The school creates and promotes strong links with the community, which enriches pupils' learning experiences robustly. For example, when visiting Harlech Castle and the village of Maentwrog, pupils learn about the legend of Twrog the Giant and the history of the Oakley family. The school also uses its community as an educational resource through environmental studies on Criccieth beach. As a result, pupils take pride in the area's traditions and their Welshness and develop their awareness of sustainability.

Staff support pupils to refine their creative skills by engaging with the creative arts successfully. The school organises appropriate opportunities for pupils across the school to take part in fitness activities, for example in the Urdd sports club, to develop their physical skills. Weekly fitness sessions and rugby training by external agencies enrich pupils' experiences successfully. Through the school's regular creative opportunities, Eisteddfod performances and an opportunity for pupils to sing in the community, staff support pupils to gain confidence to take part in an interesting variety of activities.

The school has robust arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. As a result, most pupils speak confidently about healthy eating practices and understand the importance of a balanced diet.

The school provides beneficial opportunities to develop pupils' moral and spiritual understanding during class assemblies and classroom activities. Staff encourage pupils to reflect on values such as friendship, appreciation and kindness and to consider the views of others sensitively, for example by discussing the qualities of a good friend. Staff encourage pupils to consider the views of others sensitively and acknowledge and respect equality, diversity, inclusion and the importance of values such as tolerance. For example, when studying the history of Rosa Parks, pupils in Years 4 and 4 learned about unfairness and injustice towards others.

Staff support pupils' emotional and social needs effectively. They provide robust support for pupils' emotional, health and social needs. This has a positive effect on pupils' well-being and enthusiasm towards learning and is reflected in their behaviour. The school has effective provision to support health and emotional well-being, which is tailored closely to pupils' specific needs. For example, staff have had beneficial training that provides valuable opportunities for pupils across the school to learn how to strengthen their self-respect and develop their moral, social and cultural skills.

The school follows valuable systems to gather information about the progress and achievements of pupils with additional learning needs. These include summative assessments and informal records, which intertwine to create a comprehensive picture of the individual. The school has recently developed a whole-school progress tracking system to measure progress in pupils' number and literacy skills from their starting points. Teachers use this information appropriately to identify the needs of pupils with additional learning needs at an early stage and provide intervention sensitively and suitably. The school has begun to respond appropriately to reforms to the Additional Learning Needs Act. Staff create suitable individual education plans and review these plans regularly in co-operation with parents. Staff work effectively with several specialist agencies, such as language therapists and the educational psychologists. As a result, this provides valuable support and guidance for pupils, including working with the nearby university in a research project to develop a resource to raise standards of literacy.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has created a caring and inclusive environment that ensures a strong sense of teamwork among the staff and a genuine commitment to pupils' well-being. This caring environment reflects the school vision, 'Feed the heart to feed

the learning', very successfully. As a result, most pupils show high levels of engagement.

Leaders encourage good behaviour and values that support pupils successfully in their life and work both inside and outside the school. The headteacher and staff know the school well and work together successfully to develop an effective team of teachers and support staff. This is reflected successfully by the positive attitudes of most pupils towards the school's life and work. Nearly all behave well and show respect and maturity when interacting with their peers, staff and visitors.

The headteacher has identified the school's current priorities, such as supporting staff to prepare for the Curriculum for Wales, in addition to developing an additional learning needs transformation programme. Staff have also worked with other schools in the catchment area to broaden their use of digital resources more effectively. This has led to developing pupils' digital skills. As a result, staff feel confident that they will be supported by the headteacher when trialling new strategies and approaches to teaching and raising standards.

The school has suitable arrangements to monitor staff's performance. This process leads to identifying strengths in teaching and the aspects that need to be strengthened. As a result, staff are encouraged to attend professional training and benefit from what they learn. This has led to developing staff's confidence to trial and skilfully expand their teaching strategies and the nature of their support. However, improvement processes and strategies are informal, and the monitoring and evaluation process does not lead to setting appropriate enough priorities for the school. As a result, strategic planning is not specific or incisive enough, for example to identify the need to raise the standard of pupils' numeracy skills.

Members of the governing body are very supportive of the school and fulfil their responsibilities conscientiously. By receiving reports from the headteacher, they have a consistent understanding of the school's day-to-day arrangements. For example, they have evaluated the school site to keep learners safe. The governing body also ensures that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. However, they do not challenge leaders adequately to gain information about strengths and areas for improvement in relation to teaching and learning. They do not have a sound enough understanding of pupils' progress and standards.

There are good and extensive arrangements to promote staff's professional development, for example by expanding assistants' skills in supporting pupils who need further attention in aspects such as emotional literacy and development. As a result, these pupils show continuous improvement over time in their basic and social skills. The school stays in close contact with parents and they value the care and guidance their children receive. Parents feel that the school has succeeded in creating a caring and fair environment that leads to a successful learning environment.

The school has a sensible expenditure plan which ensures that it has enough resources to meet pupils' needs purposefully. Leaders monitor the budget carefully and ensure fair funding to align with important needs. They make good use of different grants that have been allocated to the school, for example by using the pupil development grant to provide support programmes for pupils who need further support with their learning.

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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