



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

A report on

Ysgol Gynradd Y Felinheli

**Felinheli
Gwynedd
LL56 4TZ**

Date of inspection: June 2023

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh

About Ysgol Gynradd Y Felinheli

Name of provider	Ysgol Gynradd Y Felinheli
Local authority	Cyngor Gwynedd
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	179
Pupils of statutory school age	138
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	21
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>	3.3%
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>	23.2%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	63.8%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/12/2014
Start date of inspection	26/06/2023

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 Felinheli is a caring and welcoming community that provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to learn about their area, culture and heritage in addition to the wider world. Leaders place a firm emphasis on safeguarding pupils and promoting their well-being effectively. Due attention is given to respecting diversity within its community.

Most pupils enjoy their time at the school and make sound progress from their starting points. They feel that all staff take exceptionally good care of them and that they are given valuable opportunities to undertake a range of rich and interesting activities. Most pupils are well behaved and show strong motivation and a curious interest in their learning.

The school's curriculum provides a wide range of interesting and stimulating experiences. A strong feature of provision is the effective methods that staff use to provide rich creative experiences for pupils, which weave into several aspects of the curriculum. As a result, most pupils' artistic and creative skills develop strongly and they take pride in the opportunities they are given to share this work in the local community. Learning activities are effective in supporting pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and digital skills successfully. However, teachers do not always plan activities that stretch older pupils to the best of their ability. Teachers share learning aims and success criteria with pupils appropriately. This provides suitable opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning during activities. On the whole, teachers do not provide feedback that is specific enough or challenging enough to correspond to pupils' ability.

The headteacher has a clear and robust vision for the school, which is based on developing pupils' well-being. She is supported skilfully by the deputy and middle leaders and there is a strong sense of teamwork across the school. Governors play a proactive role in the school's life and work and demonstrate a sound understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement.

Recommendations

- A1 Ensure an appropriate level of challenge to support pupils to develop their skills to the best of their ability
- A2 Provide purposeful feedback so that pupils improve their work in a timely and effective manner

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, a minority of pupils have skills that are appropriate in terms of what is expected for their age. As they move through the school, most pupils make sound progress from their starting points. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make good progress during their time at the school, particularly in terms of well-being.

Most of the youngest pupils listen well and follow staff instructions appropriately and use an increasing range of vocabulary in their play and learning, for example when making a honey sandwich to eat and enjoy. Nearly all pupils in Years 1 and 2 speak confidently about their work and experiences, for example when working in a group to create a successful marble tunnel. As pupils move through the school, they speak Welsh and English with increasing confidence and use appropriate vocabulary, for example when explaining the effect of climate change on our planet.

Most pupils across the school develop their reading skills successfully. They show an enthusiasm towards reading and value the interesting range of reading texts, in terms of books and digital resources, that are available to them. Most of the youngest pupils develop early reading skills robustly and, by Year 2, they use a good range of reading techniques effectively to interpret less familiar words. At the top of the school, most pupils develop their higher order reading skills appropriately to gather information from different sources, for example when discovering facts about the heart. They read a range of literature meaningfully in Welsh and English.

Most of the youngest pupils develop sound writing skills and, by Year 2, many write extended pieces and show a sound grasp of Welsh syntax. For example, they use catchy adjectives to create effect when writing a portrayal of Branwen. Older pupils apply their writing skills to different contexts suitably. For example, Year 3 pupils write an e-mail to complain to the County Council about building plans. At the top of the school, most pupils write appropriately in a variety of contexts in both languages. They write Merlin's monologue, by varying the structure of sentences and adding effects such as rhetorical questions. However, older pupils do not refine their work thoroughly enough following feedback. As a result, their writing work is not always as good as it could be.

Overall, pupils make good progress in terms of developing an understanding of mathematical concepts, such as number, shape and measurement. For example, the youngest pupils apply their understanding of fractions when mixing compost in the outdoor area. Many older pupils use their numeracy skills appropriately in their work across the curriculum, for example as pupils in Years 3 and 4 collect and analyse

data to compare the temperature in Patagonia with the temperature in Wales successfully. At the top of the school, pupils in Years 5 and 6 research the cost of different trips independently to reason which attraction is within the class's agreed budget. However, older pupils do not develop their mathematics and numeracy skills extensively enough. This is because teachers do not plan activities with the highest level of challenge.

Most pupils of all ages and abilities use digital equipment confidently and independently to support their work. For example, the youngest pupils take pictures of their finished work on a tablet computer before uploading it to a website to share their work with their parents. By Year 2, pupils create and program animations of creatures from the local forest skilfully. As pupils move through the school, they build firmly on their skills. For example, Year 3 pupils use programmable computers to send a message of thanks to Gareth Bale, while pupils in Years 5 and 6 work together skilfully on an online platform to develop and edit a factual report about endangered animals.

The sound creative skills of most pupils are a strong feature of the school. Year 3 pupils succeed in presenting the history of the migration to Patagonia by interweaving the disciplines of the arts highly skilfully. By studying the work of an artist from Eryri and a Patagonian legend, they use their understanding of lines, pattern and texture to design and print a cloak for the main character of the legend. Most pupils sing tunefully with a sound awareness of pitch and tone. As a result, most pupils develop to become curious and creative learners.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are happy and safe at the school. They feel that all staff take exceptionally good care of them and that they are given valuable opportunities to undertake a wide range of rich and interesting activities. They take pride in the fact that they are able to contribute to activities in the community regularly. For example, the school's older pupils participate through music and song in the Felinheli Festival.

Nearly all pupils know whom to approach when they need advice or support and feel comfortable in doing so. A good example of this is pupils chatting naturally during their 'Swigen' ('Bubble') time, expressing their emotions or talking about any concerns sensitively. Most pupils behave exceptionally well, take turns completely naturally and consider each other's feelings respectfully. Nearly all are extremely polite and very willing to talk to each other and adults, explaining their work maturely and intelligently.

Pupils make appropriate contributions to what they learn. For example, they take advantage of the opportunity to share their interests and aspirations by contributing to mind maps at the beginning of the termly themes. As a result, pupils' enthusiasm and participation in their learning are strong.

Most pupils have a good understanding of the importance of eating and drinking healthily and discuss the benefits confidently. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 explain how eating fruit during morning café time contributes towards their 'five a day'. Pupils take part enthusiastically in a variety of physical activities both inside and outside the school, which has a positive effect on their well-being and fitness. As a

result, most pupils have a sound awareness of the importance of physical and mental well-being.

Most pupils develop well as enterprising and creative contributors and take part in valuable activities effectively. For example, older pupils work successfully in pairs and small groups on their design and print skills to create a flag for the local archive office. Many show interest and perseverance when participating in new aspects of their learning, for example as pupils at the top of the school learn about the customs of 'street food'.

Members of pupil's voice groups are proud of their roles and take their duties seriously. Representatives work enthusiastically on a variety of activities and make a valuable contribution to the school's life and work. For example, the school council holds an activity to recycle school uniforms to raise money for charities, while the eco council maintains a fitness area and a water reservoir to save electricity. As a result, pupils are aware of the importance of sustainable development and the global climate crisis.

Through their awareness of fairness and equality, most pupils develop to become ethical and knowledgeable citizens. They respect the needs and rights of others as part of a diverse society. A good example of this is the way in which the Urdd's main 'message of peace and goodwill' in terms of challenging racism is woven into a music workshop for pupils to learn about reggae music and the customs of different cultures. Pupils also consider what contributes to a society that respects human rights effectively. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 show friendly and caring attitudes towards others by sending Christmas cards to children at the local hospital and by painting stones and distributing them in the community as a prompt to bring cheer to the residents of Felinheli.

The eagerness of nearly all pupils to learn contributes to a high level of attendance and this again is a strong feature of the school.

Teaching and learning experiences

Staff have a good working relationship with the pupils. They foster a positive and supportive learning environment and, as a result, most pupils behave well. Nearly all members of staff model language of a high standard purposefully and place a consistent emphasis on stretching pupils' oral skills.

Teachers deliver the main principles of the Curriculum for Wales increasingly successfully. They plan purposefully and are beginning to adapt and trial different approaches and teaching methods as necessary, for example the '*tasgau ffa*' at the top of the school. Staff aim purposefully to follow pupils' lead, which increases their ownership of their learning. On the whole, provision motivates pupils to commit themselves conscientiously to their tasks across the areas of learning and experience. One of the school's strengths is the purposeful planning to link the expressive arts through literacy and humanities. Rich provision provides continuous opportunities to promote pupils' imagination and curiosity by working with artists, musicians and members of the community. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 create a film of a poem composed by pupils about the local area, '*Cerrig yr Afon*'. There is excellent use of imagery, personification and similes in the poem, for

example *'a'r dŵr yn glir fel crisial'* ('and the water as clear as crystal') to describe the flow of the river.

On the whole, teachers plan valuable experiences that develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding robustly. Learning activities are effective in supporting pupils to apply their literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the school successfully. For example, within their termly themes, teachers provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to write at length for different purposes, for example as Year 4 and 5 pupils write a newspaper article about the disaster of the floods. Many teachers plan stimulating educational visits to enrich and reinforce learning within the classroom. For example, as part of the theme *'Ein Byd Gwyllt'* ('Our Wild World'), Year 5 and 6 pupils visit Chester Zoo. Through this visit, they are given rich opportunities to deepen their knowledge and understanding of wild and rare animals. However, teachers do not always plan activities that stretch pupils to the best of their ability.

The school provides valuable creative and cultural experiences for pupils. These include weekly Urdd sports sessions, dance sessions, residential trips to Glan-llyn and taking part in the cultural activities of the Felinheli Festival. The school promotes Welshness and regular use of the Welsh language successfully through various activities, such as celebrating Welsh Language Music Day, St David's Day and Urdd activities.

The school's youngest pupils benefit from purposeful experiences in the school's outdoor areas. Pupils in the reception class and Year 1 take advantage of purposeful opportunities to develop their oracy and creative skills by planning and constructing a submarine. Pupils in Year 2 go on a weekly visit to the local forest, *'Cerrig yr Afon'*, where they solve various problems, for example by collecting twigs and applying their knowledge of fractions to cut them correctly. Pupils are also given an opportunity to participate in a forest mindfulness session, where the tranquillity and fresh air provide an appropriate opportunity for pupils to relax and reflect.

In the best lessons, teachers' presentations are lively and stimulating and engage the interest of most pupils. Teachers ask probing questions, which are effective in recalling previous learning. However, in the few sessions where teaching is not as effective, teachers over-direct learning and the level of challenge is not always suitable to meet the needs of all pupils.

Across the school, teachers track the progress and development of individual pupils and groups in great detail. They use various assessments effectively to ensure that pupils receive the support they need to succeed. Teachers share learning aims and success criteria with pupils appropriately. This provides suitable opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning during activities. However, teachers do not always provide feedback that is specific or challenging enough to correspond to pupils' ability. As a result, pupils do not always extend their work to the best of their ability.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring, inclusive and friendly community that promotes the importance of good behaviour and courtesy successfully. All staff are committed to ensuring that the school's values, along with the emotional well-being of pupils, are key to their work. For example, the worry boxes and staff's approaches to identifying

pupils' feelings on a daily basis are successful in encouraging pupils to discuss their feelings and emotions at the same time. Staff also make purposeful use of the cosy havens inside and outside the classrooms to support pupils' emotional needs. This contributes well to the high level of trust between staff and pupils.

Provision to support pupils with additional learning needs is one of the school's strengths. The additional learning needs co-ordinator (ALNCo) is very effective in her role and ensures that there are effective arrangements in place to identify, support and monitor pupils with additional learning needs across the school. There are useful one-page profiles and individual development plans that outline pupils' needs and the necessary support clearly. The school works closely with pupils' families and liaises well with specialist external agencies, where appropriate, to support pupils and their families. As a result of monitoring and evaluating provision regularly, most pupils with ALN make good progress against their targets.

Pupils are given regular opportunities to voice their opinions and offer beneficial comments about the school. The school council provides valuable opportunities for them to lead charity events in the community and take part in events such as Ffair Miri Mai. Members of the school council work with a famous artist to improve the quality of the environment in the foundation learning area. All this supports them to develop as responsible citizens.

The various learning areas both inside and outside the main school building support pupils' well-being successfully. Areas like the outdoor classroom for the school's older pupils, the wild area and the playing field, along with the caring ethos, lay firm foundations for learning. Pupils take advantage of highly beneficial opportunities to celebrate their Welshness and feel that they belong to the local community. The close links with the local area ensure that pupils play an important role in the life of the area, for example as the school band performs in various concerts and as pupils take part in the millennium milestone community project in Felinheli. They are also given highly valuable and rich opportunities to develop their creative skills by working with a famous local artist to create their own artwork. For example, pupils create and design bucket hats for Wales supporters, showing unique imagination and creativity in their work.

Whole-school and class assemblies are held, which make a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Across the school, suitable emphasis is placed on inclusion and developing pupils' understanding of their human rights. For example, they take part in a one-day workshop on 'Show Racism the Red Card' and research the history of influential individuals, such as Rosa Parks and Nelson Mandela. Provision develops pupils to show a beneficial appreciation of equality, equity and justice, and the way that these concepts relate to their day-to-day lives. The sense of belonging among pupils means that they are eager to come to school each day and has a positive influence on attendance over time.

The school has a strong culture of safeguarding and staff provide a caring and secure environment for pupils, which meets requirements and is not a cause for concern. Arrangements for monitoring pupils' regular attendance are sound.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision based on creating a comprehensive and caring school where the well-being of pupils is at the heart of all of the school's work. She is supported effectively by the deputy headteacher and they share this vision successfully with pupils, staff, governors and parents.

The headteacher and leaders prioritise the well-being of staff and pupils and ensure that they receive purposeful support, where necessary. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher and the senior management team, there is a good record of making improvements and a recognition of the need to continue to improve specific aspects of teaching and learning further. Leaders foster attitudes of robust resilience and perseverance among pupils and are aware that the needs of all pupils need to be met. However, on the whole, expectations for the school's oldest pupils are not high enough.

The school promotes a culture of professional development. All members of staff are given regular opportunities to attend courses and training that link directly to their individual needs and the school's strategic priorities. A strong example of this is the way in which the headteacher has allowed a member of staff to develop professionally by linking disciplines in relation to the expressive arts across the curriculum. As a result, the work on *'Ymfudo i Patagonia drwy'r Celfyddydau'* ('Migrating to Patagonia through the Arts') and the film *'Cerrig yr Afon'* allow pupils to achieve high standards in their creative skills, literacy and understanding of Welsh history and culture.

The headteacher has high expectations for the performance of staff and her own performance. All members of staff have improvement targets that link closely to the improvement plan and some that prioritise their professional development. Progress against these is evaluated regularly by the headteacher.

The school has successful self-evaluation processes. These include listening to pupils, lesson observations, learning walks and scrutiny of pupils' work. The school improvement plan identifies suitable actions and targets for measuring progress. It is a 'living' document where leaders respond to the findings of self-evaluation processes and set specific sub-priorities. For example, they develop the outdoor area of the foundation learning class effectively. This enables teachers to plan successfully for an appropriate level of challenge for the youngest pupils. The school's processes to evaluate its effectiveness and ensure quality include all members of staff. This leads to good improvements, particularly in pupils' digital skills.

The school's governors know the school well. Members of the governing body support leaders and staff robustly and visit the school to undertake first-hand self-evaluation activities. For example, they conduct learning walks and discuss work with pupils to measure their understanding of their work. This allows the governors to develop a valuable awareness of the school's current needs. As a result, they play a proactive role in the school's life and work and show a sound understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. The governing body supports the culture of safeguarding successfully and ensures that the school has comprehensive arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders ensure that staff make the best use of the building and the local community. This includes interesting outdoor spaces such as the wild garden, 'Cerrig yr Afon' forest, planting areas and adventure trails. Leaders, including the governors, act on their vision to improve the school site by working with the local authority to extend the hall. Leaders allocate resources effectively and use the pupil development grant sensibly to provide specific support programmes. By doing so, assistants provide pupils with beneficial support to make progress in their learning.

Leaders have established beneficial relationships with parents, which contribute well to their ability to support their children at home. For example, staff in the youngest classes communicate regularly with parents by using a beneficial app. The Friends of the School are extremely active and parents provide beneficial extra-curricular experiences for pupils, for example when pupils compete successfully in a local football competition.

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:

Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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