



Report summary for parents and carers on Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda

Date of inspection: February 2024

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

Summary

Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhondda is a caring community that places a strong emphasis on supporting pupils' well-being. In lessons, most teachers foster supportive working relationships with pupils and a purposeful and positive learning environment. As a result, most pupils behave well in lessons and a majority make sound progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills. In general, pupils make sound progress in developing their digital skills and many develop their literacy skills successfully. However, pupils do not make enough progress over time in their number skills. The school has suitable processes for identifying and meeting the needs of pupils with specific learning difficulties purposefully.

The school's pastoral team works tirelessly to provide comprehensive and valuable support and provision for pupils. The school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe are implemented appropriately. The school provides an innovative personal and social education (PSE) programme to help pupils develop respect for each other and their community. The school's Senedd and its sub-committees provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to influence the work and life of the school. In addition, there are many opportunities for pupils to take part in engaging extra-curricular activities that meet their interests and enrich their experiences. However, although the school has implemented schemes such as '12 days of Christmas' to encourage pupils to attend school, pupils' attendance, especially among those who qualify for free school meals, is not high enough.

Many teachers give clear instructions and explain concepts effectively. They offer useful verbal feedback when moving around the classroom in order to support pupils to make progress in their work. In a majority of lessons, teachers plan a series of activities to build pupils' knowledge and understanding and they ensure valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their subject knowledge and wider skills. However, in a minority of lessons, pupils do not always make as much progress as they should. In these cases, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Too often, teachers do not question pupils sufficiently probingly in order to encourage them to think deeply about their learning.

Since his appointment, the headteacher has worked tirelessly to ensure the best in terms of the well-being of the school's pupils and staff, in addition to addressing important issues that are in need of improvement. As part of this work, he has re-established a number of systems and arrangements to ensure the security of the site, budget management, and developing the role of governors as effective critical friends. The school's leaders have responded strongly to some national priorities such as developing Curriculum for Wales, the Welsh language, and mitigating the impact of poverty on pupils' achievement. The provision of 'Cwtsh y Cwm' is a notable strength.

The school has a sensible calendar of suitable self-evaluation activities and, on the whole, leaders have an appropriate understanding of the school's main strengths and areas for improvement. However, leaders do not always prioritise strategically enough regarding what needs to be improved. This means that some important areas such as aspects of teaching skills and attendance are not given sufficiently specific and incisive attention.

Main evaluation of the sixth form

In general, sixth-form pupils make good progress. They show very positive attitudes to their work, whether working under the guidance of a teacher in their lessons or during opportunities to work independently. Most pupils are skilful at recalling previous knowledge and use their skills effectively to develop their knowledge and understanding during their lessons. They contribute maturely to class discussions, by listening to each other, discussing intelligently and weaving quotes skilfully as evidence to support their points. For example, in discussing the relationship between the character of Elis and other characters in the film 'Hedd Wyn' in their Welsh lessons.

Recommendations and what happens next

We have made 3 recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1 Improve pupils' attendance**
- R2 Improve the way in which leaders, including governors, act strategically and prioritise to ensure improvement**
- R3 Improve teaching by addressing shortcomings identified in the report, including the provision for pupils' numeracy skills**

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

If you would like to read more about Estyn's evaluation of the school, please follow this link to the [full report](#).

© Crown Copyright 2024: This report may be re used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Publication date: 10/04/2024

Please note that the photographs displayed may not be of the school that is the subject of this report.