



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

A report on

Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni

**Gelli Haf Road
Fleur De Lys
Blackwood
NP12 3JQ**

Date of inspection: May 2024

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni

Name of provider	Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	1821
Pupils of statutory school age	1607
Number in sixth form	214
Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average (The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in Secondary is 21.2%)	15.7%
Percentage of pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) (The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in Secondary is 14.8%)	9.5%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	11.7%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	01/04/2020
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	13/05/2024
The school is a partner school for initial teacher education.	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to 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 Gyfun Cwm Rhymni is a homely and caring community where a strong emphasis is placed on supporting pupils' emotional and social needs. The well-being team works tirelessly to provide excellent support and pastoral assistance for pupils. The 'Hwb', 'Hafan', 'Y Ganolfan' and the well-being rooms on both sites provide refuge, care and support to develop pupils' confidence and help them to make progress in their learning. The comprehensive programme of valuable interventions and personal and social education provision supports pupils' educational progress and well-being effectively. Pupils are offered valuable opportunities to share their views and influence aspects of school life through the school council and its sub-committees. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are sound. A strong feature is the way in which staff promote the importance of good attendance by responding actively to any obstacles that affect pupils' attendance. As a result, attendance rates, including those of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, are higher than in similar schools and the rate of persistent absences is significantly lower than the national average.

Since the monitoring visit in September 2021, leaders have continued to strengthen and improve the school's provision. The headteacher and his team work tirelessly to ensure that teaching and learning and well-being are at the heart of the school's work.

In most cases, teachers foster a supportive and close working relationship with their classes. They manage pupils' behaviour and engagement effectively. As a result, most pupils behave well in lessons and listen attentively to their teachers' instructions and explanations. Over time, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make sound progress in their subject knowledge and understanding. Many pupils also make sound progress in their oral skills and their reading and writing skills develop appropriately. A majority have secure number skills and, overall, pupils make appropriate progress in their digital skills.

In many lessons, teachers have suitable expectations in terms of what pupils can achieve and they plan activities that provide appropriate challenge. They explain concepts effectively and question regularly to test pupils' knowledge. These teachers introduce new vocabulary to pupils and correct the use of English vocabulary sensitively. However, in a small minority of lessons, there are some shortcomings in teaching which mean that pupils do not make as much progress as they could. These include teachers talking for too long, using only closed questions and instances when they are too willing to accept brief answers from pupils. Even when teaching is sound, teachers do not always take advantage of every opportunity to stretch pupils to achieve the best of their ability.

There is a strong culture of evaluation and self-criticism among leaders. They use a comprehensive calendar of self-evaluation activities effectively to gather evidence about the quality of teaching and learning, well-being provision and other aspects, such as the effect of professional learning. A strong feature of the work of leaders is the way in which they evaluate the quality of teaching in light of its effect on learning. As a result, leaders have a clear understanding of the main strengths and areas for improvement and the school development plan focuses carefully on the school's

main priorities, including the aspects of teaching and learning that need to be further improved. Leaders have succeeded in creating a culture where professional learning and receiving feedback on how to improve the quality of teaching are at the heart of the staff's work. The governing body is passionate about ensuring Welsh-medium education for pupils in the area, but they do not always challenge leaders' decisions sufficiently. The finance committee has recently worked with the headteacher and the business officer to monitor the school's budget in more detail. However, leaders have not been successful enough in making savings and there is a significant deficit in the budget.

Due to the timing of the inspection, we were unable to observe lessons or evaluate the work of sixth-form pupils.

Recommendations

- R1 Address the budget deficit
- R2 Strengthen the role of governors as critical friends
- R3 Ensure that teachers always plan teaching, including provision for skills, to challenge pupils and to ensure they make the appropriate progress

What happens next

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

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to self-evaluation based on evaluating the effect of teaching on pupils' learning and well-being and how the school promotes attendance and inclusion, to be disseminated on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Learning

Over time, many pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN), make sound progress in their subject knowledge and understanding. These pupils are able to recall their previous knowledge confidently and a majority of them apply it appropriately to new contexts. In a few cases, where teaching is extremely effective, pupils make strong and swift progress. In these lessons, pupils apply their knowledge and understanding to complex contexts successfully and, in some cases, ask their teachers probing and mature questions to deepen their understanding. However, in a small minority of cases, pupils do not make as much progress as they could, mainly due to shortcomings in teachers' planning.

Most pupils listen attentively to their teachers' instructions and explanations. They also listen respectfully to the contributions of their peers. Many pupils are willing to contribute orally and have a suitable grasp of vocabulary and subject terminology when speaking. These pupils often structure their responses in an organised manner, using sentence patterns intelligently. When questioned more deeply, a majority of pupils are able to give relevant extended answers to their teachers' questions and can discuss constructively with others when undertaking work in pairs. They often compare their ideas maturely and, at times, ask their peers questions to stimulate their own understanding. A few pupils contribute sophisticated extended responses to class discussions, using a wide range of vocabulary in Welsh and English. For example, they discuss the themes of the novel '*Llyfr Glas Nebo*' maturely in their Welsh lessons. In a minority of cases, pupils turn to each other and discuss in English when they are expected to discuss in Welsh or they include a number of English words in their oral responses. When reminded of the importance of using the Welsh language, these pupils respond positively and succeed in expressing themselves appropriately in the language.

Many pupils develop valuable reading skills when gathering information and locating facts in texts. A majority are able to compile information from various texts and analyse it suitably. A majority of pupils recognise stylistic features in text confidently and identify messages that are implied in texts and digital materials skilfully. These pupils show an appropriate understanding of the importance of considering the author and purpose of sources when discussing their reliability. A few pupils have sophisticated higher-order reading skills. They are able to discuss mature themes, identify more complex stylistic features and discuss their effect on the reader skilfully. For example, they consider expertly how George Orwell's novel, '*Animal Farm*', reflect the events of the Russian revolution in their English lessons.

Many pupils demonstrate suitable skills when writing for different purposes. They structure sentences and paragraphs appropriately in Welsh and English and use subject vocabulary correctly and purposefully. A majority of pupils consider purpose and audience carefully when writing at length. A few do this in a sophisticated manner, using rich adjectives and similes. They use correct syntax skilfully to have an impact on the reader, for example when creating a persuasive speech on the importance of being bilingual in their Welsh lessons. However, the work of a minority of pupils is littered with awkward syntax, careless spelling mistakes in both Welsh and English, and English words when expected to write in Welsh.

A majority of pupils have secure number skills which they use successfully in their mathematics lessons and in other relevant subjects. These pupils calculate fluently by using whole numbers, decimals, fractions and percentages confidently. For example, they calculate domestic bills, investments and the best deal under different offers. A majority of pupils have a good understanding of shape, space and measurement skills. For example, in their woodwork lessons, pupils measure correctly, and understand the implications of tolerance. Many pupils produce and plot scatter graphs successfully and, when given an opportunity to do so, a majority are able to interpret this data confidently. They calculate measurements of averages and interpret information that has been presented in the form of lists, tables and graphs to draw sensible conclusions. A few pupils have advanced numeracy skills. They explain their reasoning clearly when solving problems and use their understanding of numerical concepts to solve complex problems. For example, pupils calculate the

areas of compound shapes which include parts of a circle or apply their numeracy skills to solve algebraic problems. A few pupils have weak number skills, including their understanding of the four rules, percentages, fractions and ratios. As a result, these pupils have difficulty solving numerical problems that have been contextualised.

Overall, pupils make suitable progress in their digital skills, and use them appropriately in subjects across the curriculum. In their digital technology lessons, a majority of pupils develop more complex skills, including how to code effectively.

On the whole, most pupils have appropriate physical skills. A minority have physical skills of a high standard. For example, they show physical agility when practising and improving their hurdling skills in athletics lessons. Pupils often show perseverance and resilience when developing these skills. Many pupils develop their thinking skills suitably. For example, in their science lessons, they predict what the ideal number of blades for a wind turbine would be. Overall, pupils develop their creative skills soundly, for example when composing a monologue of a zoo animal in their Welsh lessons.

The school provides a specialist unit for pupils with additional learning needs on behalf of the local education authority. Overall, the communication and social skills of pupils who attend 'Y Ganolfan' develop soundly and a minority make better progress than expected.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Pupils at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni are proud of their school and its community. Nearly all pupils cherish the school's core principle that 'Relationships are everything' and are caring and considerate of the feelings of others. Most pupils, including pupils at 'Y Ganolfan', know who is there to help them and value the positive and helpful support of the staff.

Most pupils feel safe at school. They behave in a civilised manner in lessons, on the corridors and in busy areas of the school during break and lunchtimes. Very few pupils disrupt this special atmosphere and they have very little influence on others. Most pupils feel that they are free from bullying and that staff deal with any instances appropriately. Many pupils believe that staff listen to them and that they are treated fairly and equally.

There is an obvious maturity in the conversations of many pupils and their conduct is excellent. Pupils are very willing to talk and they greet and discuss their work maturely with visitors. By engaging in activities that promote the Welsh language or other diverse experiences, many pupils make a valuable contribution to school life. This empowers them further to be ethical and informed individuals who take pride in their Welsh identity and their ability to speak Welsh.

The school council is inclusive and operates democratically. The representatives understand their role in being a voice for all pupils. They work innovatively as one effective body to represent the Gellihaf and Gwyndy sites. The council's work is reported regularly to the rest of the school. The full council and the powerful

sub-committees ensure constructive discussions with staff to contribute to the school's vision and daily life.

Many pupils take advantage of attractive extra-curricular and curricular opportunities to develop their physical skills and cultural awareness. They delight in their successes and are proud of opportunities to celebrate these with the whole school community. Many pupils make wise choices in terms of their own health and well-being and respond positively to opportunities to discuss important and contemporary topics, such as mental health and healthy eating.

Most pupils are punctual, ready to work and demonstrate a positive mindset. They respond politely and respectfully and listen meaningfully to the contributions of their peers and their teachers. Many are ambitious, skilful and confident pupils who answer questions and interact effectively in pairs. They show resilience and perseverance in their lessons. A few pupils are very curious and enthusiastic when responding to the teacher's questions and when applying themselves to the lesson's activities. A majority show pride in their work and ensure that it is well presented.

Between the 2018-2019 and 2022-2023 academic years, the school's attendance rates fell by less than what was seen nationally. Last year, attendance was higher than that of similar schools. The rate of persistent absences is significantly lower than the national average. The attendance of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is significantly higher than the national average. The school's unverified data shows that attendance rates have improved by more than was seen nationally this year. Many pupils are aware of the importance of good attendance and that it is linked to their progress.

Teaching and learning experiences

Staff at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni know their pupils well and show obvious concern for their well-being. This is a notable feature of teaching at the school. In most cases, teachers forge a close and supportive working relationship with their classes. They have effective practices which ensure that pupils come into lessons in an orderly manner, settle to work quickly and transition smoothly from one activity to the next. They manage pupils' behaviour and engagement effectively, praising their efforts in a supportive manner to encourage them to persevere. Most teachers have sound subject knowledge and are good language models. They give clear instructions and many move around the classroom regularly monitoring pupils' engagement and progress. These teachers provide useful support to individuals or groups, as necessary.

In many lessons, there is a good balance between time where the teacher directs learning and time for pupils to work independently. In these lessons, teachers explain concepts effectively and ask questions regularly to test pupils' knowledge and ensure that they understand their explanations. They introduce new subject terminology to pupils effectively. They correct the use of English vocabulary or instances where pupils turn to speak English in Welsh-medium lessons sensitively. These teachers have suitable expectations of what pupils are able to achieve and plan activities that provide them with appropriate challenge. They consider carefully what they want pupils to learn when planning activities and tasks build purposefully on each other. They use a variety of suitably structured short tasks to prepare for extended tasks,

ensuring that the tempo of the lesson matches pupils' pace of learning. These teachers use various resources productively to build pupils' confidence and check their understanding as they work independently. Around half the teachers use a variety of beneficial assessment and questioning techniques to test understanding and ensure that pupils respond at length.

In a few cases, the quality of teaching is highly effective. In these cases, teachers use their subject knowledge skilfully to predict what pupils will find difficult. On this basis, they plan their activities carefully, ensuring that pupils are stretched to the limit and challenging them to think deeply throughout the lesson. In these cases, teachers ensure that there are valuable opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge and skills to complex and new contexts independently. They ask pupils probing questions to challenge their way of thinking and deepen their understanding. They adapt their questions skilfully for pupils of different abilities. As a result, pupils make strong and swift progress in these lessons.

In a small minority of lessons, there are shortcomings in teaching which means that pupils do not make enough progress. These shortcomings include teachers talking for too long, which limits opportunities for pupils to work independently, activities that do not provide enough challenge, or teachers not identifying pupils' misconceptions in a timely enough manner. Often in these cases, the nature of the teacher's questioning means that they only receive short and limited answers from pupils. Even when teaching is sound, teachers do not always stretch pupils to achieve to the best of their ability, even when they are ready to face a higher challenge.

When assessing pupils' progress, on the whole, teachers identify the main strengths and areas for improvement in pupils' work, including their linguistic errors. Teachers often note positive comments on pupils' effort. In the best practice, teachers provide beneficial oral or written feedback which gives pupils specific advice on how to improve their work. However, the quality of feedback for pupils varies and teachers do not always ensure that pupils respond purposefully to their advice.

The school has robust systems to track pupils' progress over time and these provide leaders with a useful overview of pupils' achievement, including those with ALN. They use this information purposefully to identify any pupils who are underachieving in a timely manner and have purposeful programmes to support these pupils.

The '*Cwricwlwm i Rymni*' for Years 7 and 8 provides a number of valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding and knowledge across areas of learning and experience. It aligns clearly with the school's vision to nurture capable and ambitious pupils. The curricular transition arrangements from primary to secondary are sound as a result of effective co-operation with partner primary schools.

The school has a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of nearly all pupils. The school provides good support and guidance to pupils in the senior school and the sixth form to make choices about their courses and their future and leaders respond appropriately to the needs and aspirations of those pupils. A wide range of options are provided, including a variety of academic courses and a good range of vocational courses such as retail, sports and coaching principles, woodwork skills and engineering. These are taught at the school to allow pupils to pursue a relevant

learning pathway through the medium of Welsh. The school provides beneficial opportunities to broaden the experiences of more able and talented pupils, for example through the 'Catalyst Cymru' programme and by working with an international university. The most vulnerable pupils have access to beneficial learning experiences to support their personal development. Work to develop a purposeful alternative curriculum for these pupils at 'Y Ganolfan' is in its early days.

The school provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of the history and experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and LGBTQ+ people. This is planned and driven with the support of the pupils' citizenship committee and presented in assemblies, registration periods, health and well-being lessons and in some subjects, such as humanities.

The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities that enrich pupils' experiences, such as activities within health and well-being and the arts. An increasing effort is made to offer pupils in the lower school experiences to develop their emotional and social skills and to learn about diversity. This is done mainly through the valuable health and well-being programme, which includes well-being lessons, days to celebrate differences, assemblies, well-being activities and lessons to ensure an understanding of relationships and sex education. The school also helps pupils to make healthy choices in terms of their lifestyle, including how to keep themselves safe online.

Senior leaders have a sensible long-term strategy for developing pupils' skills. They have established a team of co-ordinators to lead the strategy and inform valuable co-operation with the partner primary schools to ensure consistency in provision for pupils' subject skills and understanding. The co-ordinators work beneficially with subject leaders to identify and enrich opportunities for pupils to practise their skills across the curriculum. Following valuable professional learning sessions, teachers focus on improving pupils' oracy and higher-order reading skills. These strategies are having a positive effect on these skills in many subjects across the curriculum.

Plans for promoting Welshness and promoting pupils' use of the Welsh language are sound. Pupils are given a variety of valuable opportunities for learn about their heritage and Welsh culture through the health and well-being programmes, extra-curricular experiences and the wider curriculum. This work is reinforced by the Welsh ethos and atmosphere around the school and the positive and consistent encouragement from staff for pupils to 'turn to Welsh'.

Care, support and guidance

Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni is an inclusive, caring and homely community that supports pupils' emotional and social needs exceptionally well. The core principle 'Relationships are everything' is encouraged, promoted and enriched by positive working relationships between staff and pupils. All of the school's staff contribute enthusiastically to developing eloquent and polite pupils who represent the school with pride. The community feel is reinforced further by regular communication and timely consultation with parents and carers.

The school has a strong ethos of promoting respect and positive behaviour. This includes an appropriate system for dealing with any unacceptable behaviour, and

setting sensible steps that are understandable for pupils and staff alike. Staff work diligently to ensure that pupils are ready to learn in lessons and encourage their success. As a result, this has a very positive effect on pupils' attitudes and has reduced the number of exclusions over time.

The school has robust processes for implementing the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act. The ALN team has a strong vision and they commit themselves enthusiastically to ensuring that the school supports the specific learning, physical and emotional needs of pupils. There are meaningful and graduated arrangements for responding to pupils' needs which include an 'inclusion panel', where key staff discuss and plan support. A comprehensive programme of interventions is delivered by an extended team of staff to deal with pupils' specific needs.

A supportive atmosphere in the 'Hwb', the 'Hafan', 'Y Ganolfan' and the well-being rooms on both sites ensures that pupils take advantage of the support available effectively. These hubs provide a safe space for pupils where the refuge, care and support found there promote their confidence and positive attitudes towards work. The 'Hafan' is a useful resource that meets the needs of pupils with social difficulties and challenging behaviour. Here, the curriculum is tailored specifically and personally to facilitate pupils' achievement and support them to return to the mainstream in due course. At 'Y Ganolfan', pupils of all ages are given valuable opportunities to work together to develop their life skills successfully within a safe and stimulating environment.

Arrangements for transferring information at important periods in the child's school life, along with pastoral transition activities, are obvious strengths. The ALN team also has very effective procedures to get to know pupils' needs and establish a relationship with families at an early stage.

The school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. This is done through assemblies, reflections and through the personal and social education programme. Provision is tailored according to pupils' well-being needs. Relevant leaders work purposefully with external partners to ensure personal support that focuses on the needs of individual pupils.

The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to share their views and influence aspects of school life. The process of campaigning, voting and electing representatives democratically raises the profile of the school council, which makes it an honour for pupils to represent their year group. The work of the school council is enhanced through the sub-committees to ensure that there is an opportunity for a wider variety of pupils to voice their opinion. The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to develop beneficial leadership skills. One notable example is the 'Period Mentors', who have worked hard to raise awareness of menstruation among the school community.

The school promotes the importance of attendance effectively through newsletters and strategies such as the 'attendance marathon'. Robust tracking systems allow leaders to identify groups of pupils with low attendance at an early stage and, as a result, the school responds actively to these absences. The school works proactively with pupils and their families, along with external agencies where appropriate, to

address persistent absences. For example, the school supports pupils through online learning provision and by conducting visits at the end of the school day. This leads to an increase in individuals' contact hours with the school and, in some cases, a successful return to mainstream classes.

There is a robust culture of safeguarding across the whole school community. The safeguarding team ensures that detailed policies are implemented appropriately by staff. Overall, staff and governors understand their roles well in terms of safeguarding and receive suitable training regularly. Staff benefit from receiving updates and referrals to additional information about safeguarding through the weekly staff bulletin. Any issues relating to safeguarding, child protection or bullying are recorded in a timely and purposeful manner.

Leadership and management

The headteacher leads the school with energy and enthusiasm. He is ambitious and passionate about ensuring the best experiences for pupils and the future of the school. The rest of the leadership team support him firmly. Leaders have consulted widely with parents, governors, staff and pupils to create a shared vision based on positive relationships and high expectations for all. The senior leadership team is self-critical and evaluates the school's success in realising this vision purposefully.

The senior leadership team work together effectively. Recently, the responsibilities of senior leaders have been refined so that they are more strategic across both sites. However, there is some overlap in the responsibilities of a few leaders and some of the responsibilities are administrative.

Leaders have responded well to national priorities, particularly in planning valuable opportunities for pupils to develop their oral and reading skills. A strong emphasis is also placed on using and ensuring positive attitudes towards the Welsh language. As a result, pupils are proud of their Welshness and their local area. In order to develop '*Cwricwlwm i Rymni*', leaders of 'disciplines' work together effectively within and across the areas of learning and experience and, as a result, pupils are given interesting learning experiences through 'big projects'. A notable strength of the school's work is the emphasis on fostering positive relationships and well-being provision. Leaders promote a robust culture of safeguarding. As a result, the school has succeeded in improving its attendance rates and reducing exclusions over time.

The school works closely with pupils and families to mitigate the effects of poverty and provide timely support, where necessary, including providing hygiene products, school uniform and prom clothing. Leaders evaluate the effect of pupil development grant expenditure thoroughly to ensure that the strategies have a positive impact on the standards of pupils from low-income families.

Most middle leaders understand their roles well. These leaders analyse data and various sources of evidence carefully to plan and improve pupils' attainment, attendance and behaviour. On the whole, disciplinary subject meetings focus beneficially on educational issues without too much focus on purely procedural issues.

Middle leaders are supported well by members of the senior leadership team. On the whole, regular link meetings between senior and middle leaders have led to improvements in provision over time. Arrangements for managing performance are clear and are implemented consistently. However, in a few cases, the teaching staff's performance management objectives are not specific enough.

Members of the governing body are passionate about ensuring Welsh-medium education for pupils in the area. They understand their responsibilities clearly in terms of promoting healthy eating and drinking. They are supportive of the school but do not always challenge leaders' decisions precisely enough.

In addition to prioritising pupils' well-being, the senior leadership team also considers the well-being of staff. Regular and open conversations between members of the leadership team and staff and the staff coffee morning every Friday mean that leaders have succeeded in creating a friendly and pleasant atmosphere at the school. The school works productively with parents and the community. There is a regular and comprehensive bulletin for sharing information about the work and running of the school.

Recently, the headteacher and business manager have been monitoring the school's budget more closely. The governors' finance committee contributes to this process. However, leaders have not been successful enough in making savings and there is a significant deficit in the budget.

The school has a comprehensive calendar of activities to gather first-hand evidence of the quality of teaching and learning. These include learning walks, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. Leaders seek the views of parents and pupils regularly through questionnaires and focus groups. A strong feature of leaders' work is the way in which they evaluate the quality of teaching in light of its effect on learning. Leaders at all levels analyse performance data and internal data carefully and accurately. Leaders of the disciplines use evidence from item level data to adapt their plans and refine teaching beneficially within their areas of responsibility. Leaders evaluate the effect of the work of the pastoral teams on pupils' well-being closely. As a result of this detailed and thorough evaluation, most leaders have a clear awareness of the main strengths and areas for improvement.

The development plan focuses appropriately on the school's main priorities. It includes suitable success criteria, identifies responsibilities, includes milestones to keep track of progress and identifies funding to carry out the proposed activities. Although most actions are valid, a few of the school's strategies are not comprehensive enough to improve certain aspects, for example the achievement of the most able and talented pupils.

Professional learning is a strength and the school has succeeded in creating a culture where staff are keen to receive training and feedback on how to improve the quality of their work. Staff value the support that is available and feel that they are supported well to develop in their roles. Leaders use findings from the school's self-evaluation processes to plan a programme that responds to the school's improvement priorities. This is tailored closely to the development needs of individual members of staff, including staff who teach outside their specialism. The programme includes beneficial training to develop staff's leadership and teaching skills. The

school provides strong support for students on initial teacher education programmes, newly qualified teachers and other teachers who are early in their career. The school works purposefully with its partner primary schools and other secondary schools to provide beneficial opportunities for staff to share good practice. Leaders evaluate the effect of the professional learning programme regularly to ensure that it has a positive effect on pupils' progress.

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 publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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