



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

A report on

Ysgol Gymunedol Maenclochog

**Maenclochog
Clynderwen
Pembrokeshire
SA66 7LB**

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 Gymunedol Maenclochog

Name of provider	Ysgol Gymunedol Maenclochog
Local authority	Pembrokeshire County Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	102
Pupils of statutory school age	79
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	6
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 23.7%)</i>	7.5%
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 13.2%)</i>	10.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	40.5%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	03/01/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	10/05/2016
Start date of inspection	13/05/2024
Ysgol Maenclochog and Ysgol Brynconin have been federated since 2020 and the headteacher was appointed to the post in January 2022. The headteacher's wife	

and firm leadership, in co-operation with governors and staff, has developed an effective learning community at both schools.

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 Maenclochog and Ysgol Brynconin have been federated since 2020. The headteacher's wise and firm leadership, in co-operation with governors and staff, has developed an effective learning community at both schools.

The school is a successful community that celebrates pupils' Welshness, politeness and respect particularly well. The headteacher provides clear and wise guidance and values the efforts of everyone who contributes to pupils' well-rounded education. Staff are committed to ensuring a high quality of care and well-being for pupils in a homely and supportive learning environment. This has a strong influence on pupils' attitudes towards each other and towards other people both inside and outside the school.

Staff model language purposefully and enthusiastically, which has a robust effect on pupils' oral skills from a young age. As a result, pupils' use of, and pride in, the Welsh language is an extremely effective feature. Teachers and assistants work together successfully across both schools to provide a range of stimulating learning and play experiences for pupils. Pupils' pride in the history and culture of the local area is a strong feature of the school.

Most pupils develop knowledge, understanding and skills that are appropriate for their age and starting points successfully. For example, they develop their listening, speaking and mathematics skills purposefully, and contribute appropriately to class discussions and express their opinions confidently. However, pupils' independent writing skills have not been developed robustly enough.

On the whole, teachers provide activities that respond to the requirements of the pupils' range of ability appropriately and ensure their engagement in their learning well. However, teachers do not always challenge pupils to support them to make the best progress in all aspects of their development.

There are purposeful opportunities for pupils to influence decisions relating to school life, in addition to contributing ideas about the content of their learning. For example, members of the Senedd (school parliament) decided that all classes should take part in outdoor activities as part of *Dydd Gwener Gwyllt*.

There are purposeful opportunities for members of the governing body, in co-operation with staff, to play an active part in the self-evaluation process which includes visiting classes, discussing with pupils and scrutinising their work. As a result, leaders and staff have a thorough knowledge of their school and address most improvements purposefully.

The relationship between the school and parents is extremely strong. Parents are proud that their children attend such a supportive school which is completely central to the rural community of the Maenclochog area.

Recommendations

- R1 Develop pupils' writing skills
- R2 Provide activities that challenge pupils to make the best progress in all aspects of their development

What happens next

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

Main findings

Learning

Most pupils start at the school with good communication, number and social skills. By the end of their time at the school, most pupils, including those with additional needs, make strong progress in many of their skills.

Most pupils listen and contribute effectively during class presentations and respect each other's contributions and those of adults. Most of the youngest pupils talk confidently during their activities, for example when discovering more about sinking and floating when experimenting with different objects in the water tub. The oldest pupils communicate confidently and use a wide range of relevant vocabulary and language patterns with increasing accuracy when sharing their ideas in discussions, for example when sharing their knowledge and understanding of geographical coordinates while completing work to map locations in Pembrokeshire.

Most pupils' reading skills develop suitably in both languages. The youngest pupils show a clear enthusiasm for books. By Year 2, most pupils show increasing confidence when reading aloud. They use useful methods to build unfamiliar words successfully and begin to recognise the purpose of full stops and exclamation marks. At the top of the school, many read a good variety of texts confidently. They characterise effectively and predict maturely in both languages. However, a few pupils have difficulty understanding the content of Welsh texts, which impairs their ability to discuss the content in detail.

Most of the youngest pupils develop their early writing skills effectively when making marks in dough, rice and when painting, for example. By Year 2, most form letters correctly, present their work in a polished manner and build simple words and sentences accurately. As they move through the school, the writing skills of a majority of pupils develop appropriately. By Year 4, they write pieces that are increasingly lengthy, for example when writing an emotional letter home from an evacuee. At the top of the school, a majority of pupils write suitable extended pieces with an increasing understanding of language features; for example, they use

paragraphs appropriately and use examples of local dialect to create an effective picture of the landscape of the 'Maenclochog Mountains' when writing an imaginary story. They have a rudimentary understanding of different writing techniques including the use of quotation marks and exclamation marks to guide readers. However, many pupils in the school's upper years do not develop their writing skills in a wide enough range of genres independently enough.

Most pupils develop secure mathematics skills by using methods for handling numbers correctly. By Year 2, many pupils calculate numbers up to 1000 confidently and recognise the names and properties of 2 and 3-dimensional shapes confidently, for example when learning about the features of Welsh castles. Most of the oldest pupils' mathematics skills develop well. By Year 6, they have a sound understanding of place value up to a million and are confident when changing equivalent fractions to fractions in their simplest form. As pupils move through the school, many build successfully on previous learning in terms of their mathematical understanding. Many pupils' numeracy skills develop purposefully across the school.

From an early age, most pupils apply their digital skills in a range of creative contexts to support their wider learning. Many of the youngest pupils use a digital tablet confidently to record their learning, for example by using an animation program to tell a story and develop simple control skills with the turtle. By Year 2, they develop their skills by making a film of an interview with a princess during the time of *Llywelyn ein Llyw Olaf* (Llywelyn the Last), for example. Many pupils in Years 3 to 6 use their digital skills confidently to support independent research by editing, redrafting and presenting their findings on the theme work on the Second World War. They handle data confidently about the height of the Preseli mountains and begin to develop their coding skills to control digital devices to light up. Pupils confirm and understand methods of keeping safe when using the internet confidently.

Most pupils' creative skills develop effectively across the school. Nearly all enjoy art activities and make purposeful choices when selecting different media to convey interesting work. By the end of Year 2, pupils use water bottles to create melodies effectively. Most pupils benefit from performing regularly in concerts and local and national eisteddfodau. They develop their presentation skills well in digital clips that support their work in the classroom.

Most pupils develop physical skills with increasing confidence. They take pride in their sporting achievements and demonstrate good skills when playing with their peers. For example, they show clear enthusiasm when developing their throwing and aiming skills during a learning session.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils feel happy and safe within the school's inclusive and stimulating environment. Nearly all are very proud of their school and value the rich range of experiences that are provided for them. This is reflected in pupils' enthusiasm towards their learning.

Nearly all pupils behave excellently and treat each other and adults with courtesy and care. Most develop a clear understanding of the essential values that contribute to their development as well-rounded individuals and responsible and informed citizens.

The way in which the oldest pupils care and take advantage of opportunities to support the youngest pupils with their reading reflects this effectively.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They talk enthusiastically about their work and engage positively with class topics. The youngest pupils familiarise themselves quickly with classroom organisation when choosing activities in different areas of provision. Across the school, most pupils concentrate for extended periods and demonstrate motivation and curiosity in their learning. They develop increased resilience when faced with new learning experiences and situations. They understand the principle of seeking their own solution when they encounter difficulties in their learning. They implement the 'HACA' method (*Hunain, Adnoddau, Cyfoedion, Athrawon* – Self, Resources, Peers, Teachers) when responding to challenges with their learning, which strengthens their development as independent learners effectively.

Pupils' contribution to the life and work of the school is effective. They are happy to discuss any concerns with members of staff and are confident that they listen to them. Most pupils are enthusiastic when providing ideas about what they would like to learn in their themes. Many take ownership of their learning, for example by taking an active part in checking their own work. Most are beginning to respond positively to feedback from teachers and assistants when taking steps to improve and refine their work.

Most pupils are ready to undertake responsibilities regularly. Many make good use of opportunities to develop their leadership skills through a range of pupil Senedd responsibilities. As a result, most pupils explain the effect of their work on aspects of school life confidently. For example, they speak enthusiastically about the influence of the well-being cabinet on the successful campaign to improve school attendance rates.

Most pupils develop a sound understanding of how to take care of their mental and emotional well-being. They develop the ability and confidence to discuss and share their feelings, which helps them to understand and show empathy for others in distress. They demonstrate a good understanding of cultural diversity, for example when learning about different religious celebrations. They are beginning to understand ethical issues that the world faces, such as the adverse effect of waste on the environment. Pupils deepen their understanding of this successfully when undertaking environmental projects on the area's beaches.

Most pupils understand the importance of making wise choices that affect their health. They understand the importance of a balanced diet and the need to keep the body and mind healthy. They make informed decisions about what they eat and drink and their lifestyle, for example by drinking water regularly and attending sessions to cook healthy food with their parents at school. They apply themselves enthusiastically to their physical sessions and to a range of activities to promote fitness, such as sports clubs and competitions in different sports.

Most pupils have a sound understanding of procedures for staying safe, including staying safe online. They apply this effectively when undertaking their learning activities.

Teaching and learning experiences

Staff have a close and warm working relationship with pupils. They treat all pupils with kindness and respect and, as a result, the learning environment is inclusive and caring.

Leaders promote effective co-operation between staff across the federation. They share ideas purposefully to provide a broad and rich curriculum for pupils. They consider the effectiveness of provision and pupils' progress sensibly which, in turn, improves teaching and learning skilfully. As a result, teachers provide valuable and stimulating learning experiences across the areas of learning which engage and hold pupils' interest successfully.

The content of the curriculum is inclusive and promotes a fair opportunity to develop confident and well-rounded individuals. Teachers listen and act on pupils' ideas effectively when planning activities and experiences that follow their interests, for example as they guide their themes and contribute valuable ideas to their learning experiences.

The curriculum enables most pupils to gain the necessary skills in listening, speaking, reading and mathematics in learning sessions. However, overall, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills.

Provision within the learning areas, both inside and outside the building, is rich and provides beneficial opportunities for pupils to play, learn and research in an interesting environment. Attractive displays, which are a suitable combination of celebrating pupils' work and guidance to support their learning, enrich the learning environment effectively.

Staff invite visitors to the school to stimulate pupils and organise trips and visits that enrich pupils' understanding of particular areas of learning. For example, pupils present information about the Celts for the public following a visit to Moel Drygan as part of a project with Pembrokeshire National Park. Teachers provide exciting opportunities for pupils to work with, and learn about, local artists and celebrities, which improves their understanding of the area's culture.

Staff have high aspirations for developing pupils' Welsh communication skills. They model polished language which supports pupils effectively to develop their ability to speak Welsh with increasing accuracy. Teachers take advantage of opportunities to expand pupils' vocabulary during activities, including when they are learning outdoors.

Staff provide a wide range of stimulating and interesting experiences that ensure pupils' interest and enthusiasm in their activities. On the whole, their activities respond to the requirements of pupils' range of ability appropriately and ensure their involvement well. However, teachers do not always provide activities that challenge pupils to make the best progress in all aspects of their development. Teachers present information clearly and provide pupils with purposeful guidance to complete their activities. They support learning effectively and encourage them to succeed.

Staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to enjoy and engage with their learning in less formal situations. Weekly outdoor sessions during *Gwener Gwyllt* days encourage pupils' curiosity and develop their co-operation and problem-solving skills purposefully. Staff also provide a variety of activities for pupils across the school after school hours. During activities, staff encourage pupils to develop their cooking skills, create and improve their social skills while playing board games and take part in sports activities.

Staff provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to discuss and improve their work as an integral part of their learning. Teachers provide purposeful feedback that offers firm guidance to pupils on various elements of their work. However, pupils do not always respond appropriately to this feedback. Staff question pupils to extend their learning effectively. In the best practice, they support pupils valuably to evaluate their achievements when considering the next steps in their learning successfully. Teachers track pupils' progress effectively and use this information purposefully. For example, teachers provide support and challenge for pupils to develop their reading skills skilfully. They share relevant information about well-being and progress with parents in reports and provide them with guidance to support their children to aim to reach the next stage of their development.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring and happy community that places a clear emphasis on safeguarding pupils and promoting their well-being effectively. There is a friendly working relationship between staff and pupils and the respect with which they treat each other is a strength. Staff work closely as a team to support the social and emotional development of nearly all pupils successfully. They know the pupils well and respond successfully to their needs. For example, they discuss pupils' emotions regularly to ensure that they are ready to learn during the day.

Pupils' behaviour is managed effectively. Staff work effectively with pupils to develop self-control methods which enable them to identify and manage their emotions. Arrangements such as developing pupils' understanding of how to maintain healthy relationships ensure that pupils' behaviour is excellent.

Suitable opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their physical skills through weekly physical education sessions and through the beneficial use of exciting playground resources. Purposeful activities develop pupils' understanding of how to eat healthily. For example, members of the Health and Well-being cabinet maintain the fruit shop with produce from the local shop successfully, which contributes well to pupils' understanding of healthy living.

Provision for pupils who have been identified as having additional learning needs (ALN) is appropriate. The ALN co-ordinator and staff provide purposeful support programmes for specific pupils. Assistants engage pupils' interest effectively during the literacy and numeracy support sessions, which enable them to show progress in their work over time. Staff work productively with external partnerships to provide specific activities and support sessions for particular pupils and their families.

There are purposeful opportunities for pupils to have a direct influence on decisions relating to the life of the school, in addition to contributing ideas about the content

and lines of enquiry of the class themes. For example, members of the Senedd have decided that all members of the class should take part in outdoor activities on *Gwener Gwyllt* Fridays.

Staff provide valuable opportunities to celebrate and develop pupils' understanding of their identity, heritage and culture. Opportunities for pupils to study the area's historical and geographical features are an extremely successful aspect of the school's work; for example, by learning about the history of the Battle of the Preselau as part of their work on the Second World War and collecting litter to learn about the impact of plastic on nature on Traeth Mawr. Staff provide valuable opportunities for pupils to perform in a range of situations, for example by competing in local and national eisteddfodau and performing in concerts in churches and chapels in the area. As a result, pupils take pride in the history of the area and their Welshness and have the confidence to perform publicly.

Teachers provide suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about the work of influential people in Wales and across the world, for example when learning about the influence of Betty Campbell on education in Wales. These experiences contribute regularly to pupils' attitudes towards respecting differences and develop them to become ethical and informed citizens.

Teachers provide valuable opportunities for pupils to develop knowledge and understanding of different religions, for example when learning about the Diwali and Ramadan festivals and by celebrating the Chinese New Year. As a result, pupils develop an understanding of the significance of the celebrations of other cultures and religions. Suitable opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect during assemblies and learning sessions on how they can help others.

The school's culture of safeguarding is sound and staff understand their roles and responsibilities, which contributes to pupils' safety and well-being. The school has robust arrangements to promote good attendance and the importance of punctuality among pupils, including monitoring rates on a daily basis. Staff communicate with parents regularly and organise follow-up activity supported by the local authority, where necessary. As a result, attendance rates are consistently high.

Leadership and management

Ysgol Maenclochog and Ysgol Brynconin have been federated since 2020 and the headteacher was appointed to the post in January 2022. The headteacher's wise and firm leadership, in co-operation with governors and staff, has developed an effective learning community at both schools.

The headteacher has a clear vision based on a caring and supportive ethos where most pupils make strong progress and develop to become conscientious members of the Maenclochog community. They realise the school motto, '*Gyda'n gilydd – dim ond y gorau*' ('Together – only the best') successfully and promote values that motivate pupils to be confident and healthy learners who take pride in their community and culture.

The headteacher sets high expectations for himself, the staff and pupils. This contributes firmly to developing a team of hard-working and supportive staff and to

promoting staff's well-being in a supportive and practical way. Staff demonstrate professional values and conduct well, which contributes directly to improving provision and ensuring that effective co-operation is a key part of the school's arrangements. The co-operation across the two schools within the federation, and with staff from schools in the area, has a positive influence on pupils' education.

Under the headteacher's skilful care, leadership procedures have been established extremely effectively across both schools. The procedures have a positive effect on pupils' well-being and progress, in addition to provision in the classrooms and the wider learning areas. Leaders and staff plan purposefully to meet local and national priorities, for example in introducing the principles of Curriculum for Wales and implementing key elements of the Additional Learning Needs Act effectively. Assistants are key members of the school team who contribute purposefully to improving progress in pupils' basic skills, well-being and social skills. Staff promote the Welsh language and Welshness successfully, which contributes to developing pupils' pride in the language and their heritage.

The school's priorities for improvement are based on an appropriate range of first-hand evidence and staff's understanding of them is sound. Effective procedures have been established to review progress, identify areas for improvement and actions for implementing them. They include an analysis of pupils' results and progress and sensible opportunities to scrutinise work and observe learning sessions. As a result, leaders and staff know their school thoroughly and address most improvements purposefully.

Members of the governing body consider useful information about the effect of the school's improvement procedures on provision and about pupils' well-being and progress. Regular opportunities are provided for them to play an active part in the self-evaluation process, including visiting classes, discussing with pupils and scrutinising pupils' work. Overall, they question the school about suitable issues, including aspects of learning that need to be developed. Governors work with staff and pupils to ensure that the school has suitable arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. They take pride in the proactive relationship that exists across the two schools.

Expenditure links purposefully to the school's objectives and improvement plans. The headteacher and governors use the school's budget effectively to enrich the curriculum and to raise and maintain pupils' standards. They link expenditure appropriately to the priorities in the development plan and monitor funding carefully to ensure its best use. Leaders plan the expenditure of the pupil development grant sensibly, which includes providing support programmes that are tailored to the learning and emotional needs of individuals. Leaders have relevant plans to use grants to reduce the impact of poverty on pupils and their families. A good example of this is the way in which they have adapted the content of the school uniform policy to reduce the cost to families.

There are valuable opportunities for staff to develop professionally. They include opportunities to receive training to improve their understanding of the requirements of different areas of learning and experience, to learn about the principles of staff and pupil well-being and to receive training on specific aspects of methods of supporting pupils with ALN. Performance management procedures promote staff's professional

learning appropriately and are beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' outcomes and provision.

The school has an active relationship with the local secondary school and primary schools in the area, which includes providing beneficial opportunities for teachers to work together while ensuring progression in pupils' key skills as part of the process of planning for the curriculum. As a result, pupils benefit from rich experiences that support them to make progress in their skills across the areas of learning.

The relationship between the school and parents is extremely strong. Staff communicate effectively with them to ensure they are aware of day-to-day events and to share information about their children's achievements and successes. Parents are very proud that their children attend such a supportive school, which is completely central to the rural community of the Maenclochog area.

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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