



## Report summary for parents and carers on Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni

**Date of inspection: May 2024**

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

# Overview

Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymini 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.



## School context

Name of provider	Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni
Local authority	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Secondary
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%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/04/2020
Start date of inspection	13/05/2024
The school is a partner school for initial teacher education.	

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