



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

**A report on**

**Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Evan James**

**Rhondda Road  
Pontypridd  
Rhondda Cynon Taf  
CF37 1HQ**

**Date of inspection: June 2024**

**by**

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

**This report is also available in Welsh.**

## About Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Evan James

Name of provider	Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Evan James
Local authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	299
Pupils of statutory school age	213
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	58
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>	12.8%
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>	6.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	24.9%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2023
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	09/05/2016
Start date of inspection	10/06/2024

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](https://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

The acting headteacher of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Evan James leads the learning community in an inspiring manner. She upholds a vision that provides an environment that fosters pupils' well-being and learning skilfully. Leaders promote a culture of co-operation among staff in a valuable manner and support them to provide beneficial learning experiences for pupils. The wider community within the school, including the governing body, shares the same vision and contributes appropriately to continuous improvement. Overall, leaders evaluate the school's strengths and areas for improvement regularly which, in turn, leads to beneficial priorities and improvement. However, self-evaluation processes do not always measure the effect of provision on pupils' progress effectively enough.

One of the school's most obvious qualities is provision to support pupils to develop their Welsh language skills. This has a robust effect on pupils' confidence to speak Welsh in formal and less formal contexts. Most pupils use their literacy, numeracy and digital skills effectively in relevant learning activities. Overall, teachers across the school take advantage of opportunities to share and emulate effective teaching practices. This means that pupils have beneficial experiences that support them to develop and apply their skills independently in stimulating learning activities. However, effective teaching practices are not adopted consistently in all classes.

The teaching team identifies pupils' well-being and learning needs skilfully. This contributes successfully to fostering pupils' interest in their learning in an inclusive and Welsh environment. Staff provide opportunities to support pupils to enjoy the various learning experiences and make progress in their skills. This includes provision for pupils who receive additional support with their learning, including those who receive specialist support in the 'Cwtsh' through the medium of Welsh.

## Recommendations

- R1 Refine self-evaluation processes
- R2 Share effective teaching practices across the school

## What happens next

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

## Main findings

### Learning

Most pupils start school with Welsh communication skills that are lower than expected for their age and stage of development. They make sound progress from their starting points, foster a love for the language and develop as confident Welsh speakers. Most pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) and those from low-income households, make strong progress across the skills during their time at the school.

Most pupils listen attentively to the presentations of activities and follow instructions successfully. They are respectful of the contributions of other pupils when working together. At the top of the school, most pupils make good progress in their learning by sharing ideas and mistakes openly, for example when discussing the accuracy of sentences to be included in a branching database about endangered animals. Nearly all pupils' oral skills develop well. By Year 2, most speak confidently and use correct vocabulary and sentence patterns in formal and informal contexts. As pupils move through the school, nearly all expand their vocabulary and communicate with increasing eloquence. For example, most make sound progress in the daily 'Sesiwn Sglein' session when practising their use of language knowledge correctly. Most of the oldest pupils communicate effectively in Welsh and English and contribute meaningfully to class discussions.

Most pupils develop their reading skills securely in both languages. By Year 2, most build words and sentences methodically and have a consistent understanding of punctuation. They are enthusiastic when discussing the content of a story and have a good understanding of the main features of a book. Following specific input to developing reading skills, most of the oldest pupils make very sound progress. For example, they research a variety of texts about the heritage of the local area to plan and contribute to a digital clip to welcome and promote the National Eisteddfod to the community.

Most of the youngest pupils develop their early writing skills successfully by forming letters and simple words in a range of materials, such as soil and sand. By Year 2, most pupils have a sound understanding of the correct form of sentences and develop their spelling skills well, for example when writing a fact file about insects. At the top of the school, most use a good range of writing skills in Welsh and English. They apply these skills successfully in a variety of stimulating contexts. For example, they use idioms and similes effectively when writing a story on the theme '*Y Ffair Ganol Nos*' ('The Midnight Fair').

Most pupils' mathematics skills build effectively. They develop an increasing range of number skills in specific learning activities. The youngest pupils count confidently up to 10. They come to recognise simple 3D shapes and develop an understanding of measurement well. By Year 2, pupils handle money up to £2 when buying fruit and vegetables in the Very Hungry Caterpillar's shop. As pupils move through the school, they develop a range of mathematical skills confidently. Most of the oldest pupils understand the relationship between equivalent percentages, fractions and decimal numbers, for example. Pupils apply and develop their skills regularly across the

areas of learning and experience. For example, the oldest pupils produce detailed line graphs when recording a scientific investigation to prove which material is the best to keep water hot.

Most pupils make strong progress in developing their digital skills. The youngest pupils use practical methods to expand their early understanding of programming instructions confidently before moving on to apply their skills digitally. For example, they move physically before coding gadgets to move around a 'leaf maze' obstacle course effectively. By Year 2, many support each other well to access, save and organise their digital work independently. At the top of the school, most pupils use a wide range of software successfully, which includes using a purposeful formula in spreadsheets. For example, they work together skilfully to create formulae to calculate the cost of hiring areas on the National Eisteddfod field.

As they move through the school, the creative skills of most pupils improve successfully. They show a sound understanding of the style and technique of various artists and experiment with their own ideas skilfully. For example, Year 6 pupils use tone effectively when conveying shadows on notable monuments and locations in the local area.

Most pupils' physical skills are strong across the school. They apply themselves enthusiastically to fitness activities and evaluate their own performance and that of others purposefully, for example as they work together to plan and perform the movement of a ghost train in the form of a creative dance.

### **Well-being and attitudes to learning**

One of the school's strongest features is its inclusive nature, caring ethos and homely atmosphere. As a result, nearly all pupils enjoy being a members of the school community and are proud that they are valued by staff. Across the school, pupils have a positive working relationship with staff. Most pupils' behaviour is sound and they are polite and respectful with each other and others. An excellent feature is the willingness of most pupils to treat each other with care and consideration, showing appreciation for the contributions of their peers. Most pupils attend school regularly and apply themselves well to their learning.

Most pupils develop robust attitudes to learning from the beginning of their time at the school and show a beneficial interest in their activities. They concentrate diligently on their learning for extended periods and show consistent perseverance and resilience. Most persevere to solve challenges and the oldest pupils use discussion partners effectively to help them when they face difficulties. On the whole, most pupils develop to become ambitious and confident learners who are ready to learn.

Most pupils have a good understanding of the importance of keeping fit and healthy. They appreciate the importance of physical exercise and enjoy using the equipment in the outdoor areas, and do so energetically during break times. The school's various activities ensure that most have a good understanding of how to be healthy and confident individuals and they make wise choices in relation to their diet. Across the school, pupils have a secure understanding of how to stay safe online.

Most pupils contribute beneficially to their learning by offering ideas to be included in the termly themes. They express valid suggestions about what to learn to develop their understanding further sensibly. Pupils value opportunities to visit places that promote their understanding of Welsh culture and heritage, such as the various visits to places of educational interest in Pontypridd.

Pupils who undertake leadership roles are enthusiastic, take their responsibilities seriously and take pride in their successes. For example, the ideas of the Criw Cymraeg play a key role in ensuring that the Welsh language has a high profile at the school through organising a variety of national celebrations.

Through their shared understanding of morals and values, nearly all pupils feel safe and know whom to approach if something is worrying them. They appreciate that adults treat them fairly and with respect. Pupils feel that staff listen well to their ideas and consider them in decisions that affect them.

Nearly all pupils develop a sound understanding of the importance of being moral and principled citizens. They develop the ability and confidence to discuss their feelings and show empathy towards others in distress. For example, the oldest pupils discuss the story of Rosa Parks' courage effectively. As a result, their awareness of fairness, equality and children's rights matures well.

### **Teaching and learning experiences**

Staff present the school's vision effectively. They focus on developing pupils' skills in stimulating learning experiences that develop their appreciation of the culture and heritage of the local area and beyond. Teachers plan rich experiences that engage and hold pupils' interest and support them to achieve well.

Teachers provide beneficial opportunities for pupils to suggest ideas that guide the direction of their learning purposefully. For example, the youngest pupils are keen to learn about the farmer's work. As a result, teachers have adapted their plans on the theme '*Arwyr Arbennig*' to include stimulating learning activities to meet their interests and learning needs. Teachers enrich pupils' learning experiences skilfully by inviting visitors to the school and organising local educational visits. For example, a local poet has worked with pupils to compose a rap about the important features of Ysgol Evan James.

Staff use their understanding of pupils' progress and achievement effectively to meet their learning needs. They present beneficial and practical activities to support the development of pupils' learning, personal and social skills. Across the school, teachers provide activities and learning experiences that ensure effective progression as pupils develop their skills over time.

As an effective teaching team, teachers and assistants work together extremely successfully to provide valuable experiences that meet the needs of most pupils effectively. They link learning experiences skilfully with pupils' previous learning and nurture their interest by ensuring a smooth pace that is suitable for their stages of development. In the best practices across the school, many teachers provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to use their skills in valuable learning activities. By doing so, pupils immerse themselves appropriately in their learning and make

consistent progress. However, a few teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their skills purposefully enough in rich activities. This limits pupils' ability to immerse themselves fully in their activities and make independent choices about what they learn and how to present their work.

Through purposeful co-operation, teachers and assistants promote the youngest pupils' learning skills successfully in attractive and purposeful learning areas both inside and outside the classroom. This promotes the principles of foundation learning extremely successfully, for example as pupils practise their fine motor skills while milking the cow in the imaginary farm. By doing so, the learning areas provide valuable opportunities for pupils to apply their skills with increasing independence. Across the school, staff use the outdoor areas beneficially to support pupils' learning, for example when planting and harvesting vegetables from the garden as part of their cooking activities.

All staff establish a caring working relationship with pupils and use an effective range of teaching methods to support them to make progress in their skills. The Welsh language is central to the life and work of the school and staff take advantage of every opportunity to model and support pupils' oral skills as a core part of their learning experience. Staff have high expectations for pupils to communicate in Welsh in a range of formal and less formal situations. To achieve this, teachers present and review vocabulary and language patterns extremely skilfully in beneficial daily sessions. By doing so, pupils develop the confidence to speak Welsh and build on their skills firmly.

Teachers provide relevant feedback and ensure that pupils understand what they need to do to move their learning forward. For example, valuable opportunities are provided for the oldest pupils to reflect on their learning and refine their work to develop their skills further. Teachers also support pupils to use consistent methods to highlight good aspects and areas for improvement in their learning. As a result, most pupils respond effectively when improving their work.

Teachers track the progress and development of individual pupils and groups in detail. They evaluate and assess pupils' work regularly and use this information appropriately.

### **Care, support and guidance**

The close working relationship between staff and pupils, and between the pupils themselves, leads to a community with a familial, friendly and warm ethos. Teachers and assistants know the pupils exceptionally well and respond effectively to their learning, emotional and social needs. This reinforces their learning and well-being and encourages pupils to foster resilient attitudes towards their experience at the school.

Provision for pupils with ALN is sound. The ALN co-ordinator is extremely conscientious about her responsibilities and the development of pupils' learning. Staff gather useful information about pupils' progress on their journey through the school and analyse progress in their outcomes effectively. As a result, they identify pupils who need additional support quickly and provide a good range of support programmes that targets their specific needs successfully. For example, staff provide

extremely valuable support to pupils in the 'Cwtsh', which is a dedicated resource that responds to, and meets their needs, purposefully. This provision has an extremely positive effect on pupils' learning experiences.

Staff have close and productive links with a range of external agencies to support pupils with ALN across the school. This includes specialists, such as the education psychologist, as part of the process of ensuring provision to target suitable help and support for pupils. The close contact and communication with parents contribute very effectively to this provision. This, in turn, contributes beneficially to ensuring that most pupils make consistent progress in their skills.

The passion of all staff for the development of the whole pupil ensures that the learning environment is inclusive. Provision for meeting well-being needs is a strength, for example as staff provide a morning arrangement where pupils share their feelings. Through this, teachers work diligently in responding to their needs and identify any pupils who feel anxious or uneasy. This helps to develop pupils' resilience and perseverance. The school is creative in the way in which it provides sessions in the 'Llety Lles' for pupils who need support relating to their emotional well-being.

One of the school's strengths is the way in which staff promote and develop pupils' understanding of their identity, heritage and culture. Pupils take advantage of valuable opportunities to celebrate their Welshness and feel that they belong to the local community. Regular opportunities are taken to share and celebrate these elements through a range of beneficial activities. The school places a strong emphasis on providing a range of trips and visits to support the curriculum. For example, pupils visit the Calon Taf Centre, where a local historian presents valuable information about the town's rich history. This engages and holds their interest in their learning successfully.

The school provides rich opportunities for pupils to take part in performances and events as individuals and in groups to foster their self-confidence and expressive ability. For example, staff provide good opportunities, jointly with officers from Pontypridd Museum, for pupils to stage a presentation tracing the history of the horses that worked underground in the coalmines.

Presentations during worship sessions help pupils to understand issues relating to respect, empathy and courage. For example, the health and well-being council chooses to support local charities that are relevant to supporting the needs of the school's pupils. Staff also provide opportunities for pupils and their families to contribute to the local food bank and a second-hand school uniform stand is organised in the school foyer.

The school's arrangements to prepare pupils for the world of work are effective. Recently, representatives from an international business came to help pupils build a suspension bridge on the playground to inspire the engineers of the future. These beneficial opportunities contribute well to pupils' understanding of potential careers in the world of work in the future.

The school's procedures for ensuring pupils' punctuality and regular attendance are robust. Staff keep appropriate records of absences and contact parents in a timely



manner to discuss any concerns regarding their children's attendance. External services are used effectively to support this. Leaders set high expectations for pupils' safety and have established a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

## **Leadership and management**

The acting headteacher leads the school in an inspiring manner and motivates pupils to develop their skills in a happy and caring environment. The leaders' vision, '*O Bydded i'r Heniaith Barhau*', to establish a Welsh community with Welsh language of a high standard, is a notable quality of the school's life and work. Leaders support staff to nurture pupils' well-being and promote their learning successfully which, in turn, gives pupils the confidence to immerse themselves in their learning and make progress.

Leaders' high expectations and an effective culture of co-operation between all members of staff is a strong feature of the school. Members of the acting senior leadership team contribute valuably to support leaders and staff in developing the school. All staff are keen to develop their practice in fulfilling their duties increasingly skilfully, for example in developing methods of evaluating and assessing pupils' progress. Teachers are given valuable opportunities to develop their leadership skills by working with their peers and sharing responsibilities for different aspects of the school's improvement priorities. Leaders also support staff to take part in a useful range of professional learning and ensure regular arrangements for them to work with staff from local schools. For example, they share and emulate the principles of effective teaching and learning purposefully. This supports all staff to develop their teaching skills effectively and ties in well with the performance management arrangements.

Leaders have good knowledge of the needs of pupils, the school and its community. They conduct a variety of relevant activities that support them in developing the school in a culture of mutual trust. Self-evaluation processes identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement appropriately and priorities are presented in a school development plan. On the whole, the school has a successful track record of improving the quality of provision, for example when supporting teachers to raise pupils' confidence in their Welsh reading skills. However, leaders do not always use the findings of monitoring processes proactively enough when evaluating the effect of provision on progress in pupils' skills.

Members of the governing body provide leaders and staff with valuable support and work together regularly to provide high quality Welsh-medium education. They undertake their duties with complete dedication and use their professional skills and expertise successfully in supporting leaders on their journey to develop the school further. Governors receive valuable information and presentations from staff and pupils about the school's activity, which equips them to support and challenge leaders as appropriate. This information is considered in 'impact meetings', which contribute beneficially to the self-evaluation process.

The school has robust arrangements for managing resources, including financial resources. Leaders spend the budget prudently, monitored by the governing body,

including using the pupil development grant effectively. By prioritising the school's funding, members of the governing body have supported staff to implement specialist provision extremely effectively to ensure that the needs of groups of pupils with ALN are met effectively through the medium of Welsh. Members of the governing body promote a culture of safeguarding and promote the provision of pupils' health and well-being successfully.

The school's relationship with parents is a strength and the co-operation and regular communication with them promotes the school in its community effectively. Leaders and staff share beneficial information with parents about different aspects of teaching their children in beneficial workshops. For example, they support them to practise methods of solving numeracy challenges with their children. The 'Friends' of the school work together diligently to provide activities that enrich their children's learning experiences and contribute to the cost of specific resources, for example in developing the outdoor learning environment. Staff, parents and partners in the community also work together successfully to improve the school's wider environment, for example by supporting pupils to make the school playground more attractive in welcoming the National Eisteddfod to Pontypridd.

## 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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