



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

**A report on**

**Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen**

**Bethel Road  
Caernarfon  
Gwynedd  
LL55 1HW**

**Date of inspection: April 2024**

**by**

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

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

## About Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen

Name of provider	Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen
Local authority	Cyngor Gwynedd
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Secondary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	926
Pupils of statutory school age	787
Number in sixth form	139
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%)	15.8%
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%)	18.2%
Percentage of pupils who speak Welsh at home	89.6%
Percentage of pupils with English as an additional language	
Date of headteacher appointment	01/09/2019
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	07/03/2016
Start date of inspection	22/04/2024

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](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

Pupils at Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen are welcoming and warm, engage enthusiastically with visitors and are proud members of their local community. Many behave well in lessons and around the school and are respectful of others. Most say that they are not bullied and many say that they feel safe at school. Pupils' attendance has improved this year but continues to be a cause for concern, particularly for vulnerable pupils and those who are eligible for free school meals.

In a majority of lessons, pupils make at least suitable progress. In these lessons, teachers plan useful activities and provide an appropriate level of challenge. However, in a minority of lessons, pupils do not make enough progress due to shortcomings in teaching. In these cases, planning is not secure enough and the level of challenge is not suitable.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and there is a clear vision for Curriculum for Wales. Provision to provide experiences and opportunities for pupils is a clear strength. Pupils benefit from a myriad of cultural, social, creative and sporting opportunities. They also benefit from useful provision for making decisions about the next stages in their lives. Provision to develop pupils' literacy and digital skills is developing well. Provision for their numeracy skills is beginning to develop but interventions for pupils with weak basic numeracy skills are limited.

Staff demonstrate obvious care for pupils and focus on supporting their well-being. Although there are strengths in provision for supporting pupils' well-being, oversight of this area is not sufficiently robust. In particular, provision to support pupils with additional learning needs has not been developed sufficiently, particularly in terms of tracking their progress. In addition, the whole-school overview of provision for well-being is not sufficiently incisive to be able to identify areas for improvement specifically enough. As a result, support for a few pupils is not effective enough and the work of leaders does not have enough of an impact on improving aspects such as attendance.

Leaders are successful in promoting a strong sense of Welshness and a feeling of belonging to the local area, together with providing rich experiences for pupils. They also respond firmly to a number of national priorities. The senior management team works conscientiously, but there is too much of an overlap in terms of their responsibilities and it is not always clear who has strategic responsibility for particular areas. Although there is a suitable system for self-evaluation activities, leaders do not always triangulate findings from these activities or analyse evidence from these processes well enough. As a result, they do not identify the exact aspects that need to be addressed and implementation of actions is not effective enough to ensure improvement. Governors are very supportive of the school and work diligently to fulfil their role, but the information they receive does not always enable them to challenge the school fully. The school shares information about its arrangements appropriately, but parents and staff do not always feel that the communication is adequate.

## Recommendations

- R1 Improve provision for pupils with additional learning needs and vulnerable pupils, along with strategic overview of that provision
- R2 Improve self-evaluation and planning for improvement
- R3 Strengthen strategic leadership to cover all of the school's key work
- R4 Improve pupils' attendance, including that of groups of pupils, and the strategic work to do so
- R5 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment

## What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress about 12 months after the publication of this report.

## Main findings

### Learning

A majority of pupils make at least suitable progress. A very few pupils make strong and swift progress. In a minority of cases, pupils do not make enough progress or achieve as well as they could due to shortcomings in the quality of teaching. A few make limited progress due to negative attitudes to learning or the quality of teaching.

A majority of pupils recall previous knowledge suitably and remember and use subject terminology appropriately. A few demonstrate strong subject knowledge and recall and apply their knowledge skilfully. A minority have difficulty recalling information and applying previous knowledge to new situations. A minority of pupils do not have a firm grasp of basic subject knowledge and terminology.

In lessons, many pupils listen well to the teacher and to each other. A majority contribute willingly to class discussions and the quality of their contributions is appropriate. A few make mature contributions, structuring their responses skilfully. A minority of pupils offer short responses that are not developed fully, but this is often due to the nature of the teacher's questioning and expectations. A few pupils are very subdued and reluctant to contribute. Most pupils discuss naturally in Welsh amongst themselves and a majority have rich verbal resources with natural Welsh syntax.

When reading, many pupils locate and gather information competently. They also understand the meaning, themes and characters in a variety of texts across the

curriculum well. For example, Year 7 pupils analyse the feelings of characters in novels by identifying with the character Begw in *'Te yn y grug'* by Kate Roberts. When they are given an opportunity to do so, a majority use reading strategies such as annotation and highlighting appropriately. When dealing with style and the impact of texts, a minority do so confidently and sensitively, for example when discussing war poems in English. A majority recognise methods and use stylistic terms appropriately, offering elementary analyses. A minority have difficulty analysing language and style and the effect of writing techniques and they do not have a firm enough grasp of terminology or basic elements of language. When they are asked to do so, pupils generally read aloud clearly. A few younger pupils extract information from sources effectively, identifying information that is relevant to a question and a few summarise information from sources well. A majority of younger pupils discuss the usefulness of historical sources at too basic a level. They do not develop their logic when discussing the author and the reasons for producing the source. In a few cases, where there are natural opportunities to do so, pupils do not always develop their reading skills adequately.

When writing, many pupils organise their work suitably by using sentences and paragraphs. Many produce extended writing work that is appropriate to their ability, but a minority have difficulty structuring their work and using scaffolds in a purposeful manner. A majority have a suitable basic vocabulary in Welsh and English. A minority of pupils have a wide vocabulary and use rich language in Welsh and, to a lesser extent, in English. A minority have a limited vocabulary or use words inappropriately. A few write in dialect when it is not appropriate to do so and use slang. In Welsh and English lessons, many pupils develop their writing skills well, and write in a suitable range of genres and styles, on the whole. Pupils also develop their writing skills well in some subjects across the curriculum. For example, they describe pieces of music, explaining musical elements and using terminology confidently and accurately. A majority write with a suitable level of accuracy. A minority have a weak grasp of grammar and their writing contains errors, by misspelling common words and subject terminology regularly. A few make very frequent spelling mistakes and have difficulty structuring their work into sentences or paragraphs.

Many pupils develop sound basic number skills. For example, Year 9 pupils use powers correctly and write numbers by using the standard form. A few pupils' number skills are less well developed and a very few are unable to choose and apply appropriate checking strategies. Most pupils are able to complete multi-step calculations, such as calculating a mean or comparing costs when looking for the best deal. Many pupils demonstrate a good understanding of shape work and a few succeed in applying this knowledge when solving problems in context. A majority of pupils use data successfully to produce bar and line graphs correctly. For example, in science, they are able to use graphs correctly to calculate the mass of a substance that dissolves in water at different temperatures. When producing graphs, a few pupils make basic errors, such as not labelling the axes or not keeping the bars consistent. A minority of pupils are able to explain their choice of techniques and strategies when completing a task or calculation, such as when they use their knowledge of averages to find a set of data within inverse problems. A few pupils have difficulty describing what they have done and how this meets the requirements of the question. In a few cases, pupils apply their mathematical skills confidently and complete a variety of contextual questions. However, overall, pupils do not apply their

mathematical understanding adequately across a range of different problems due to a lack of opportunities to do so.

Pupils benefit from a variety of opportunities across the curriculum to develop their digital skills, including their advanced digital skills. For example, they complete a coding course in Year 9 and design websites by using a variety of software. When they are given an opportunity to do so, they use spreadsheet software correctly to produce graphs and tables and include simple equations.

Pupils benefit from a host of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities to develop their creative skills in a variety of areas including art, music, drama, food technology and technology. For example, in photography, pupils demonstrate very robust skills in their creative work when choosing portraits to take a picture of and modify them appropriately by using digital software. In technology, they develop new ideas and refine original ideas when designing and creating a basketball goal, a stand to hold headphones or a cupboard.

Pupils' enthusiasm for developing their physical skills, particularly through physical education and sports, is notable. For example, many develop beneficial physical skills when improving their technique and practising going over hurdles in their physical education lessons.

In a few examples, pupils develop their thinking skills suitably. However, overall, pupils do not develop their thinking skills or their independent learning skills well enough. A few pupils are too reliant on scaffolds and support from the teacher.

Sixth-form pupils engage fully with their learning and show enthusiasm for their subjects. They take responsibility for their work maturely and demonstrate sound independent learning skills. These pupils discuss constructively when completing work in pairs and, on the whole, contribute enthusiastically and maturely to class discussions. Some pupils who contribute verbally express themselves extremely effectively, by using sophisticated subject vocabulary and making connections in their learning.

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

Pupils at Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen are welcoming, warm and friendly. They treat others with respect and behave in a helpful and polite manner towards staff, visitors and their peers. They take an interest in people and take advantage of opportunities to talk and socialise informally.

Many pupils feel safe at school. They enjoy school and are happy to attend. They feel proud to be a member of the school community. Most pupils say that they are not bullied and that they know whom to approach if something concerns them. They feel that staff deal effectively with any instances of bullying.

Many pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently good. They arrive at their lessons punctually and apply themselves to their work quickly. Overall, pupils treat their teachers with respect, listen to them attentively and concentrate on the work of the lesson. Many pupils persevere with tasks. However, a few pupils are slow to start

work and are late for their lessons. They do not always focus sufficiently on the teacher's instructions and, as a result, are unsure of what they need to achieve.

Many pupils are enthusiastic and willing to give answers to the teacher's questions. They treat their peers with respect and strive to make appropriate contributions to pair and group discussions. Many are also willing to contribute to class discussions and to support each other in doing so.

Many pupils behave well in their lessons and around the school site, treating their teachers and fellow pupils with respect. They understand the importance of mature and sensible behaviour, in addition to the purpose of rules and the consequences of misbehaviour.

Pupils undertake leadership roles through the class and year forums, the school council and various sub-committees, all of which discuss issues relating to pupils. The work of the council has contributed to improvements such as modernising the school toilets and adapting the uniform of the physical education department. Members of the school council have a good awareness of the importance of healthy eating and have worked with the canteen to develop and adapt the choice of healthy foods available to pupils. However, the school's wider community is not always aware of their work.

Many pupils enjoy the wide range of sports that is offered to them through clubs and sports opportunities, for example the football, netball, basketball and hockey teams. Pupils make extensive use of the 3G facilities during lunchtimes and after school. Pupils attend competitions and tournaments, and achieve success at local and national level. As a result of these experiences and provision within the curriculum, pupils are aware of the positive effect of physical activity on their health.

Pupils take pride in their Welshness and their local area. Many enjoy the very wide range of Welsh cultural activities and benefit greatly from the experiences. They take part in drama and music activities, performing at the Urdd Eisteddfod and in school musicals and concerts. Pupils also perform in the school band and orchestra, while others are members of the many choirs and musical groups. Pupils are also given opportunities to go on residential trips to broaden their horizons and benefit from experiences outside the classroom. Over the past few years, there have been school trips across Wales but also internationally to places such as Patagonia, Poland and Germany.

Sixth-form pupils are mature, friendly and eloquent. They are excellent ambassadors for the school. They have very positive attitudes towards their work and benefit from opportunities to lead, for example clubs for younger pupils such as the Lego Club and the Formula One Club. They work as Welsh and English 'BYDI' mentors and foster a positive relationship between the school's younger and older pupils.

Pupils from all years are extremely active in supporting and raising money for good causes at a local, national and international level. These, among other projects, include fundraising for Macmillan and supporting Welsh schools in Patagonia. Pupils also contribute to community projects, such as "Prosiect Canfas", in co-operation with Galeri Caernarfon and the local food bank. They understand their role as principled citizens and their contribution to their community.

Between the academic years 2018-2019 and 2022-2023, the school's attendance rate fell by more than was seen nationally. Last year, it was much lower than the corresponding figure in similar schools. There has been an improvement in attendance rates since the beginning of this academic year. However, attendance rates, including among vulnerable pupils and those who are eligible for free school meals, continue to be a cause for concern.

## **Teaching and learning experiences**

In most cases, teachers foster a positive and supportive working relationship with their pupils, which is a notable feature. They also have strong subject knowledge.

Many teachers encourage pupils' participation successfully and have clear expectations of their engagement. They introduce subject terminology and relevant vocabulary regularly when presenting. They provide appropriate resources to support learning and usually plan suitable tasks that build on each other purposefully. They circulate the classroom to support pupils and provide assistance while they work. A majority of teachers give clear instructions and provide purposeful explanations. They set an appropriate level of challenge and ask questions regularly to ensure that pupils recall their previous learning, retrieve relevant information and use this to develop their understanding.

In a few cases, where teaching has very strong features, teachers are very enthusiastic about their area of learning and succeed in igniting enthusiasm in the pupils. These teachers have high expectations in terms of pupils' engagement and achievement. They plan carefully to develop subject skills and understanding and model high quality responses. In these lessons, teachers often ask open-ended and challenging questions to probe pupils' thinking and get them to develop their ideas. They use their good knowledge of their pupils to target challenging questions. In these lessons, teachers plan carefully to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. They often reinforce the development of pupils' Welsh language and oracy by demanding accuracy and diction of a high standard.

In a minority of lessons, shortcomings in teaching mean that pupils do not make as much progress as they could. In these lessons, teachers do not explain and present clearly enough or they over-direct learning. They also do not model answers. In a minority of cases, planning is not mindful enough of the progress pupils need to make and the level of challenge does not match the age and ability of pupils. Often in these cases, teachers plan tasks that are short or too similar to each other and over-use worksheets or scaffolds that are too basic. This limits opportunities for pupils to give extended responses, develop their ideas or develop independence. Teachers in these lessons do not ask probing or extended questions often enough and are too willing to accept slang.

Overall, there is variation in the quality of the assessment and feedback given on pupils' work and the effect of that on pupils' standards and progress within and across subjects. In the best cases, teachers draw attention to strengths and areas for improvement in pupils' work and give them useful and purposeful comments. Where appropriate, they set challenging, stretching questions. They have high expectations in terms of pupils' response to their comments and the improvements they make. In a minority of cases, teachers' comments are too superficial and do not provide clear



enough guidance on how to improve the work. Many teachers draw attention to spelling, grammar and punctuation errors in pupils' written work. However, their expectations in terms of responses and corrections from pupils are inconsistent.

Interim and full reports include suitable information about pupils' achievement, attitudes to learning, behaviour and attendance, but there is not enough of an explanation for parents about the significance of grades or levels of well-being. There is a suitable system for collecting pupils' achievement data and leaders are beginning to use this information to plan for improvement.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of most pupils. There is a comprehensive and inclusive curriculum in the sixth form which includes a range of vocational and academic subjects. The school has responded to pupils' aspirations and interests by introducing subjects such as criminology and sports training, together with meeting the needs of the local labour market through courses such as the food and nutrition vocational course. Similarly, there is a wide range of subjects available to pupils in Key Stage 4. The school has a beneficial partnership with other schools and local colleges, which allows them to expand the range of subjects available to pupils across Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. These include hair and beauty, countryside and the environment and automotive engineering.

The school provides valuable opportunities to stretch more able pupils by offering courses such as additional mathematics in Key Stage 4 and extra-curricular activities such as the Brilliant Club and the SEREN networks. The school also has a purposeful alternative curriculum which meets the needs of some groups of pupils in Key Stage 4. Through this, they are given an opportunity to pursue practical courses and receive beneficial volunteering experiences in their communities through links between the school and local companies.

The school provides pupils with valuable experiences to develop their understanding of careers and the world of work, which helps them make informed decisions about their future. Effective use is made of Career Wales provision and the 'Twt' lessons, along with open evening and taster sessions for new subjects to support pupils to make choices in Years 9 and 11.

Leaders at all levels have a clear vision for Curriculum for Wales which has been produced jointly with the school council and is based strongly on 'providing opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge of their area, their country and the world.' For example, in Year 7, pupils are given an opportunity to compose a piece of music inspired by the local landscape. There is purposeful planning across many of the departments to provide a variety of beneficial learning experiences outside the classroom in the local area. For example, a successful 'Adventure Week' is held in the summer term as part of the Health and Well-being area. Through this, Year 7 pupils are given valuable opportunities to develop their social skills and lead when undertaking a variety of outdoor activities. However, in a few cases, planning for Curriculum for Wales is not effective enough to develop subject specific skills and, as a result, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to deepen their subject knowledge to ensure meaningful progress.

Pupils' learning experiences are enriched through a wide range of diverse extra-curricular experiences, which they value greatly, particular in the field of the performing arts and sports. A significant number of pupils take part in performances such as the musical 'Hairspray' and there are many opportunities for pupils to perform in the various school choirs and bands, along with competing across several sports.

The skills co-ordinators are enthusiastic and have a very good understanding of their areas. They provide staff with beneficial support when planning for pupils' progress in their skills. This year, the school has planned purposefully to develop pupils' reading skills while ensuring consistency in the use of methods and strategies that are presented and these are used appropriately across the school. The numeracy co-ordinator has begun valuable joint planning with partner primary schools. In relevant subjects outside mathematics, there are a few opportunities for pupils to apply their basic number skills but, on the whole, provision to develop pupils' numeracy skills is in its early stages. Through a comprehensive audit, the school has identified purposeful opportunities to develop pupils' digital skills and build on them regularly through opportunities to revisit them across the subjects. Departments have developed valuable and engaging digital activities that enrich pupils' subject knowledge and understanding. For example, in the Welsh department, an opportunity is provided for Year 7 to develop their digital production skills by creating a video on an excerpt from '*Te yn y Grug*'. There are a few suitable interventions to support pupils with weak literacy skills, but provision for interventions for pupils with weak basic numeracy skills is limited.

The school supports pupils' personal and social development through a combination of the '*Twf*' programme, morning sessions and the year assemblies. Relevant topics are covered, such as healthy eating, the importance of sleep and developing an understanding of online safety.

The school plans suitable activities to teach pupils about the history and experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. For example, in humanities lessons, Year 8 pupils examine individuals from different backgrounds, including Betty Campbell and Chico Mendez.

The school is very successful in promoting a sense of belonging and pride in pupils' Welsh and Welsh language heritage. This permeates all of the school's activity, with a very strong ethos of celebrating the local community and the importance of the Welsh language. This is a strong feature.

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

Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen is a community that takes pride in its '*cynefin*', or local area, and its Welshness. The school's staff show passionate care for the pupils, foster a sense of belonging and focus on supporting their well-being.

The school has appropriate procedures to support pupils' emotional, health and social needs so that they engage positively with their learning and benefit from the extensive opportunities that are available to them. The school works purposefully with external agencies, such as the welfare liaison, the family engagement officer and the art therapist. Beneficial emotional support and guidance is available to

vulnerable pupils to overcome any obstacles that might prevent them from engaging with their learning. However, the whole-school overview of this area is not incisive enough to address the needs of all pupils. As a result, support for a few pupils is not effective enough.

The school is developing the work of complying with the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act. Procedures and processes are developing suitably, on the whole. However, procedures for tracking the progress of pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) against the targets in their individual plans and their progress from their individual starting points are not consistent and detailed enough. This work does not consider a wide enough range of information, for example pupils' achievement in their subjects, to ensure that the necessary support for these pupils is effective enough.

The school has suitable transition arrangements for pupils with individual learning plans. More recently, the school has begun to develop transition arrangements for other pupils with ALN to get to know them and facilitate the transition to secondary school. However, these arrangements have not been embedded and it is too early to see the impact of this work. There is a very good and positive relationship between assistants and pupils with additional learning needs, but assistants are not always deployed appropriately to support pupils purposefully.

The school provides a suitable Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme through 'Twf' lessons. The scheme reflects findings from analyses of health and well-being questionnaires and responds to current, local and wider affairs. Year assemblies and class assemblies also contribute purposefully to promoting pupils' moral and spiritual development and a culture where pupils are encouraged to develop as informed citizens who respect each other and their community. Through weekly themes, pupils are given beneficial opportunities to discuss rights, for example when considering tolerance, equality, empathy, sports and sportsmanship. 'Twf' days also reinforce this by providing opportunities to listen to guest speakers and work with external agencies. The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to plan activities to raise money for charities by working with the local food bank and volunteering to improve the garden at a local community centre.

Teachers foster a positive working relationship with pupils. As a result, many pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. The reward system gives staff an opportunity to promote pupils' good behaviour and effort. However, the system is not effective enough to acknowledge pupils' good behaviour and efforts in full. As a result, a few pupils miss out on opportunities to demonstrate their strengths.

There is a suitable alternative curriculum for pupils who have difficulty engaging. For example, the school works closely with partnerships to offer various courses such as an animal care course, the 'Phoenix project' and an outdoor course. However, leaders do not use information about well-being, learning needs or exclusions effectively enough to identify improvements needed in provision for specific pupils.

The school has a vision to provide unforgettable experiences both inside and outside the classroom. The wide and varied range of extra-curricular activities caters for the cultural, social, sporting and academic interests of pupils and enriches their experiences while they are at the school. Provision includes a brass band, musicals,

an eisteddfod, a large number of sports clubs and local and foreign school trips. The school provides valuable opportunities for pupils to compete and succeed locally and nationally in a variety of sporting and performing competitions. Departments also forge valuable links with local businesses and industries. For example, the science department visits Magnox as part of their subject learning experiences.

Pupils are given an opportunity to express an opinion to influence school life through the various school forums and councils. Sub-committees such as the Eco Council, the Language Council and the Sports Council have also been established to provide an opportunity to influence the school's work further. They have had a positive effect on a few whole-school improvements, for example by organising changes to the toilets and installing water fountains at the school. Each year is represented on the school council; however, leaders do not always ensure that there is a balanced representation of different groups of pupils on the school councils.

The school provides valuable opportunities for older pupils to develop leadership skills. Pupils from Years 12 and 13 benefit from opportunities to lead in the sixth form. For example, they organise a day of Children in Need activities, run various clubs and work as mentors with younger learners.

The school has useful arrangements to support pupils as they move through the school. There are robust transition arrangements which include visits, sports competitions and a parents' barbecue. These help Year 7 pupils to settle at the school. The school provides useful advice and guidance for pupils as they choose their GCSE and A Level subjects or as they move on to the next stage of their lives. This includes interviews with the careers officer, discussions with older pupils about their experiences, subject taster sessions and options evenings. Pupils in Years 10 and 12 benefit from valuable opportunities to undertake a week's work experience.

The school has begun to take some beneficial steps to improve pupils' attendance. Leaders have begun to improve pupils' and families' awareness of the importance of attendance by holding parents' evenings, sending letters about the importance of good attendance and through an attendance reward system. A team of staff, leaders and external agencies provide appropriate support to a few pupils to support them to re-engage with their learning. Leaders keep records of the actions taken with pupils with low attendance. However, they do not analyse attendance data in sufficient detail to identify trends in different groups or identify the strategies that have the greatest effect on attendance.

The school has established a suitable culture of safeguarding where the close and friendly relationship between staff and pupils is characteristic. Most pupils state that they are not bullied and many feel safe at school. Strategic planning to promote diversity, encourage tolerance and celebrate diversity is developing appropriately.

The school's processes for safeguarding pupils are suitable. The school has prioritised the security of the site and safe recruitment arrangements are sound. Comprehensive and regular training is provided for staff at all levels, including governors, on safeguarding issues and child protection processes. As a result, staff understand their roles and responsibilities to keep pupils safe and there are clear processes for them to report any concerns. Specific staff work appropriately with statutory services to refer any concerns about significant harm to children. Beneficial

and regular opportunities are organised for pastoral staff to meet with health workers to discuss vulnerable pupils and agree on support for them. Relevant staff hold regular meetings to discuss pupils' well-being. There is a suitable procedure for recording these discussions and any actions that have been taken, but the procedure for recording future actions is not clear enough.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher has a clear vision which is based on providing rich experiences for all pupils of Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen. A strong emphasis is placed on fostering a sense of belonging and pride in the heritage and culture of Caernarfon and Wales. This is incorporated in the school's motto, '*Yma wyf inna' i fod*'. This vision is shared by the school's senior management team, staff, governors and pupils.

The senior management team works conscientiously to realise this vision and fulfil their duties. However, there is a lack of balance in the team's responsibilities and the areas of responsibility of some members of the senior management team overlap significantly. This means that it is not always clear who has strategic leadership over important aspects of the school's work or who ensures accountability for them. There is not a robust enough overview of some important areas for development, such as provision for vulnerable pupils and those with ALN, assessment and attendance. As a result, leadership has not had enough of an impact on these aspects over time.

On the whole, the senior management team provides useful support for middle leaders. Line management meetings focus appropriately on developing areas such as Curriculum for Wales and cross-curricular skills. They also hold informal link meetings to help middle leaders fulfil their duties. However, the arrangements for link meetings are too varied and often give attention to operational or general issues at the expense of discussing teaching and learning. As a result, they do not always challenge leaders robustly enough.

The school has a comprehensive staff handbook which outlines the school's arrangements and procedures. However, some staff do not always feel that their voice contributes to the school's decisions.

Leaders give due attention to local and national priorities. A notable strength of the school's work is the abundance of opportunities for pupils to use their Welsh language skills through extra-curricular and cultural activities. As a result, pupils are extremely proud of their area and their Welshness. The school is also making sound progress in implementing its vision for Curriculum for Wales. Middle leaders contribute enthusiastically to the work of developing, revising and adapting the curriculum for Year 7 and 8 pupils.

The school's work to improve attendance is beginning to have a positive effect, but attendance continues to be a cause for concern. Leaders also act appropriately to reduce the impact of poverty on pupils' progress and there is a suitable culture of safeguarding. However, work to develop provision to respond to the additional learning needs act is an area for improvement.

The school has a suitable calendar of quality assurance activities. Members of the senior management team conduct activities to scrutinise work, sessions to seek

pupils' opinions, pupil and parent questionnaires and valuable learning walks. However, senior leaders do not always triangulate self-evaluation findings well enough and therefore they do not identify the exact areas that need to be addressed. As a result, action is not effective enough to ensure improvement.

There are a few examples where data is used appropriately to identify strengths and areas for improvement in pupils' performance. Overall, leaders' use of information, such as pupils' attainment and attendance data, is not incisive enough. Often, not enough consideration is given to the performance of groups of pupils.

Most middle leaders are enthusiastic about their roles. They use some quality assurance activities to identify the general aspects that need to be developed within their departments, but the use of these is too inconsistent. In addition, lesson observations and scrutiny activities often focus too much on provision. They do not consider the effect of teaching and provision on pupils' standards and well-being in sufficient detail, including groups such as pupils with ALN and those who are eligible for free school meals.

The school has a suitable performance management system where leaders at all levels play an active part in setting objectives for teaching and support staff. Objectives are set appropriately, on the whole, focusing on the priorities in the school development plan, but they are not always specific or sharp enough to have an effect on improving pupils' standards of achievement and well-being. Overall, senior leaders deal appropriately with any instances of underperformance with an appropriate level of support and challenge.

Leaders provide beneficial professional learning sessions to help teachers develop teaching, for example sessions to promote reading strategies in the classroom and how to develop a positive working relationship. These opportunities are beginning to have a positive effect on provision and standards. There is an extensive programme of opportunities to respond to the diverse needs of staff which includes internal training, opportunities to work with other schools, in addition to working with external providers.

Governors are very supportive of the school and work conscientiously and enthusiastically to fulfil their role. Governors contribute usefully to the school's quality assurance activities, for example by listening to pupils' views about their experiences at school. There is a beneficial structure of sub-panels which focus on the priorities in the school development plan. Through these sub-panels, governors provide an appropriate level of challenge on important issues such as the budget, changes to the curriculum and mitigating the impact of poverty on pupils' experiences, including the cost of school uniforms and trips. However, although the sub-panels discuss important aspects of the school's work such as pupils' attendance and achievement, they do not always receive information that is clear and accessible enough for them to be able to challenge these aspects in full. Governors understand their responsibilities in terms of promoting healthy eating and drinking and have visited the school to see what is on offer in the canteen and what experience pupils have.

The headteacher and governors monitor expenditure carefully through the work of the management sub-panel. The pupil development grant is spent appropriately to support pupils and improve the quality of their experiences, for example by providing

school uniforms, supporting educational trips, providing learning resources and holding a week of activities to enrich pupils' experiences. The main investment is in staffing and the school evaluates expenditure appropriately.

The school shares information with parents about the school's arrangements appropriately through newsletters, information evenings and digital platforms. The school also seeks parents' views by using questionnaires. However, parents do not always feel that the school communicates with them effectively enough.

## 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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