



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 Castell-nedd

**Woodland Road
Neath
SA11 3AL**

Date of inspection: February 2024

by

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

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd

Name of provider	Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd
Local authority	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Language of the provider	Welsh
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	424
Pupils of statutory school age	287
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	73
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>	13.8%
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>	4.9%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	34.8%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	0.0%
Date of headteacher appointment	28/02/2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	07/03/2016
Start date of inspection	26/02/2024

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

- a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Since being appointed, the acting headteacher of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Castell-nedd has worked diligently with leaders to identify the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers and assistants work together effectively to provide an inclusive and supportive learning environment for pupils. They know the pupils well and develop a caring and safe working relationship as they support them to learn.

Leaders set high expectations of the staff and support them to develop their skills appropriately through purposeful professional learning opportunities. They are aware of the importance of caring for the wellbeing of staff and pupils. Teachers and assistants work well together to ensure that pupils are ready to learn. The care and guidance provided to pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) is a strength.

Teachers have good knowledge of pupils' interests and they use this information appropriately to provide a range of interesting and exciting activities that engage most pupils' enthusiasm. However, learning activities do not always challenge pupils effectively enough to develop their skills suitably in a rich range of activities. In the youngest pupils' classes, staff work well together to provide an effective learning environment that inspires them to investigate and discover independently. As pupils move through the school, a few teachers over-direct learning, which limits pupils in terms of making decisions about what to present in their work and how.

Many pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They communicate in Welsh with increasing confidence and have pride in their local area. Most pupils behave respectfully and work well together. Overall, they enjoy using their skills to be enthusiastic and creative learners, for example in digital, art and expressive arts activities. Although pupils' literacy and numeracy skills develop consistently, provision does not support a majority of pupils to develop and apply these skills effectively enough. They develop good physical skills regularly across the curriculum.

Recommendations

R1 Improve pupils' writing and numeracy skills

R2 Provide activities that ensure a consistent challenge for pupils to achieve to the best of their ability

What happens next

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

Main findings

Learning

Overall, on entry to the school, many pupils' skills correspond to what is expected for pupils at their stage of development. Although most are new to the Welsh language, they acquire the language quickly and make strong progress in their oral skills from their starting points. Most pupils, including those with ALN and those who are eligible for free school meals, make sound progress during their time at the school.

Most pupils in the youngest pupils' classes develop good speaking and listening skills. They enjoy practising the Welsh language through a range of beneficial learning and play experiences. They join in enthusiastically with singing sessions and opportunities to tell stories with their peers, for example when re-telling the legend of Gnoll Park when visiting the nearby ruins. As pupils move through the school, most speak skilfully in both languages and listen and respond to each other maturely.

Most pupils' reading skills develop robustly. Soon after they start at the school, pupils in the nursery class recognise the shape of their names successfully during registration at the beginning of each sessions. By Year 2, most use phonic strategies soundly to recognise simple and familiar words correctly and make sense of the text. Pupils who are fluent readers read aloud effectively and begin to use their tone of voice purposefully to create atmosphere and hold the reader's attention. Most of the oldest pupils read with increasing confidence and show fluency and accuracy when discussing different texts.

Most of the youngest pupils develop early writing skills suitably by making marks skilfully in a range of genres. As they mature, they build on their skills appropriately by using short sentences and simple punctuation to convey meaning in a suitable range of genres. Many pupils in Years 3 to 6 develop their writing skills suitably in both languages, for example when writing an argument for keeping Welsh place names. Although they show an appropriate grasp of syntax, spelling and elementary punctuation when writing in a limited range of genres, they do not build on these skills soundly enough to write for different purposes and audiences. As a result, they do not develop writing skills that correspond to their ability and their stage of development effectively enough.

Across the school, most pupils' mathematics skills develop appropriately, including applying their number skills suitably to solve problems in different contexts. By Year 2, a majority have a sound understanding of number facts up to 100 and use their skills with increasing confidence to solve problems, for example when identifying different methods to calculate a total by using different coins. As pupils move through the school, they build on their skills appropriately. Year 4 pupils use their number

skills and knowledge of standard units of measurement to weigh ingredients to bake hedgehog-shaped bread, for example. By Year 6, many pupils use their understanding of number suitably, for example when analysing data about the number of Welsh speakers in each county in Wales. However, opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills across the curriculum are limited. As a result, most pupils do not develop their skills increasingly across the school.

Most pupils' digital skills develop well. Most of the youngest pupils use their skills successfully to enrich their work, for example when creating an animation about the story of St Dwynwen. Most of the oldest pupils combine their digital skills successfully to support their learning across the curriculum, for example when creating a multimedia book to record a scientific experiment and creating a database to organise and retrieve information about the features of digital equipment.

Most pupils' creative skills develop well. Many of the youngest pupils experiment confidently with a variety of marking equipment to create images that represent the world around them. Most build appropriately on their skills and demonstrate accuracy and creativity when emulating the styles of Welsh artists. At the top of the school, they use their skills effectively to compose digital pieces of music to represent a superhero from Wales and create a fictional story about 'Dani the Dragon' under the guidance of a famous local author.

Nearly all pupils' digital skills develop soundly. The youngest pupils apply themselves enthusiastically to physical activities in the outdoor area. They control bicycles confidently, take risks when climbing carefully and balancing on equipment and build skilfully in the forest area. Pupils build on these skills successfully as they move through the school, for example as Year 4 pupils develop their folk dancing skills. The oldest pupils take part in a range of physical activities and stimulating experiences in the outdoor area, which has a positive effect on their well-being and attitudes towards keeping fit.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils are happy and feel safe at the school and in its caring and inclusive community. They are polite and treat their peers and adults with respect and are very welcoming towards visitors. They appreciate the care they receive within an inclusive and stimulating learning environment. Nearly all pupils feel safe at school and are confident that staff listen and respond to any concerns they may have. Most pupils behave maturely towards others and show a sound understanding of the school's values, namely 'Welshness, Community and Kindness'.

Most pupils develop good co-operation skills from an early age and show respect and support to each other's contributions. On entry to the school, they work well together to solve problems, for example as they collect water from a pipe to add to porridge while playing independently. On the whole, they build suitably on these skills as they develop through the school.

Nearly all pupils are aware of the importance of being moral and principled citizens. They develop a good understanding of how to care for the world around them and are aware of how humankind is having an effect on global warming. As they develop through the school, most show an increasing ability and confidence to discuss their

feelings well with others and to show empathy. For example, by offering school uniforms for the school's vulnerable pupils. Most pupils have a sound awareness of methods for staying safe online. They understand the importance of a balanced diet and the need to keep the body and mind healthy.

Pupil voice is given an appropriate place in the school's life and work. Nearly all pupils agree that adults listen to their views and consider them in decisions that affect them, for example as they suggest ideas about what they would like to learn in relation to the termly activities.

Nearly all pupils behave very well in lessons and while moving around the school, during activities, collective assemblies and during break times. In cases where a very few pupils experience behavioural difficulties, they develop methods that help them reduce the impact on themselves and others. Pupils respond very well to input from adults and develop an appropriate understanding of expectations in terms of acceptable social behaviour.

Overall, most pupils concentrate for extended periods and contribute productively to learning activities. Many respond positively to oral feedback from teachers and assistants as they learn during their tasks. They show a willingness to respond to comments that are given to them verbally to improve their work. Overall, most pupils gain confidence and respond to agreed methods of feedback when responding to their achievements.

Teaching and learning experiences

Leaders and staff work with pupils, parents and governors to produce a vision and design a curriculum that is very relevant to the community. Teachers and assistants have a productive working relationship with pupils. Staff treat pupils equally and with respect.

Staff have a thorough understanding of pupils' needs and interests. They use this knowledge purposefully to organise and provide interesting learning experiences for pupils. Teachers meet pupils' needs well and support them to make sound progress. In the youngest pupils' classes, staff support learning skilfully through a suitable range of specific teaching and opportunities for pupils to play and learn through experiences. At the top of the school, suitable opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in a number of interesting experiences. However, activities do not always ensure the appropriate challenge to support the full range of pupils to make the best possible progress in their skills across the curriculum. Older pupils are given purposeful opportunities to develop their multilingual skills by providing French learning sessions that broaden their horizons and give them confidence as they transfer to secondary school.

Across the school, teachers make the best use of the site to create beneficial learning environments both indoors and outdoors. For example, the foundation learning classes provide stimulating environments that encourage pupils to investigate, experiment and discover for themselves. Staff implement the principles of foundation learning successfully, which develops pupils' skills well. However, a few of the oldest pupils' teachers tend to over-direct learning too often, which limits opportunities for pupils to develop as independent learners. Across the school, a

suitable range of teaching methods are used which are appropriate to the pupil's stage of development. However, teachers do not always provide activities that support a majority of pupils to develop and apply their writing and numeracy skills effectively enough.

A strong feature of the school's work is the commitment of teachers and assistants to developing pupils' spoken Welsh skills. They model polished language consistently and encourage pupils to use the language and take pride in their Welshness. Opportunities to promote Welsh identity and the history and culture of Wales are a prominent part of the school's work. For example, teachers provide opportunities for pupils to learn about the history of Lady Mackworth and Gwynfor Evans's fight for the Welsh language. This, in turn, supports pupils to appreciate their local area, Welsh history and traditions.

Staff question pupils skilfully to reinforce their learning and develop their thinking skills further. They provide pupils with beneficial oral feedback, which enables them to know what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve. They also encourage pupils to evaluate their own work and that of their peers skilfully, for example by discussing and improving their compositions in a music session at the top of the school. On the whole, teachers make appropriate use of consistent marking methods to provide pupils with suitable feedback on how to improve their work.

All pupils are given rich opportunities to benefit significantly from valuable experiences in the community. For example, teachers organise weekly visits to the town's library, make excellent use of Gnoll Park as a learning resource and benefit from their links with a local café. They take good advantage of nearby bowling and tennis facilities to develop pupils' sporting skills.

Care, support and guidance

The school is a caring, inclusive and happy community that supports the emotional and social needs of nearly all pupils very effectively. The headteacher and teaching staff know all of the children very well and aim passionately to meet their individual well-being needs. They use a wide range of beneficial methods to ensure that pupils are ready to learn emotionally. This is a strong feature of the school's provision.

Staff place a consistent emphasis on promoting pupils' positive behaviour. This is highlighted in the positive behaviour of nearly all pupils. This also has a positive effect on the very few pupils who have behavioural difficulties. Staff use suitable and varied methods which ensure that pupils start the day ready to learn. Teachers and assistants allocate time each day to listen and talk to pupils and provide regular opportunities for them to discuss their feelings, particularly during registration periods. This is a strong feature of the school's supportive provision.

Promoting equal opportunities in all aspects of provision is a central element of the vision of the school's leaders. A clear emphasis is placed on promoting equality, diversity and empathy and it is ensured that everyone's contribution is equally important. This contributes effectively to preparing pupils as responsible citizens of the future. Valuable opportunities are provided for all pupils to undertake responsibilities and contribute to the school and the wider community. Including

pupils with ALN in all aspects of the school's life and work is a strength, for example in morning assemblies and when visiting locations in the community.

Recently, the school has established robust systems to develop staff's understanding of how to support pupils with ALN. They have created information posters that are used regularly by staff to ensure their understanding of their expectations. They track provision appropriately and have established a practice of holding discussions each term to share the attainment of specific pupils. Following these meetings, staff make appropriate adaptations to the support, which enables them to meet the needs of individuals effectively.

The support provided to pupils and their families is good. Teachers consider the needs of the whole family when discussing support for pupils and they support parents well so that they can help their children at home. Teachers develop their understanding of the needs of different pupils by completing relevant research and have shared their findings with the rest of the staff. This facilitates the process of transferring key information about pupils as they move through the school.

The school's culture promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. It provides high quality collective worship sessions and provides valuable opportunities for pupils to improve their understanding of values, racism, justice, equity and other beliefs during the '*Munudau Myfyrio*' reflection periods. Through this, the school prepares pupils to be intelligent citizens of the wider world successfully.

The school promotes pupils' understanding of their Welsh identity, heritage and culture highly effectively. Recently, it has ensured opportunities for pupils to develop pride in their identity by learning about the legend of Gnoll Park and the Roman fort at Dŵr-y-felin. The school also provides valuable opportunities for pupils to take part in performances and events, as individuals and in groups. For example, opportunities are provided for them to take part in local eisteddfodau, the Urdd Eisteddfod and to sing with a local choir in a St David's Day concert.

The school's provision to improve attendance and punctuality is effective. It listens to the pupil's voice effectively to organise methods of rewarding classes for regular attendance. The safety of the school's building and grounds is consistently good. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher provide the school with robust leadership, which ensures an effective strategic direction and a culture that promotes continuous improvement. They have a clear vision based on ensuring that the well-being of pupils, their families and staff is an integral part of the school's life. They share this vision successfully with staff, pupils, parents and governors. The aim to provide an opportunity for all pupils to succeed is at the heart of all of the school's activity.

Manageable leadership systems have been established across the school and members of the senior leadership team work together effectively and support the

acting headteacher purposefully. Leaders plan sensibly to meet local and national priorities. Staff address developments in education enthusiastically, including linking learning experiences with the principles of Curriculum for Wales. Teachers are encouraged to experiment with pedagogical approaches and succeed in implementing key elements of the Additional Learning Needs Act successfully. The school promotes the Welsh language and Welshness effectively, which develops pupils' pride in their language, their identity and their heritage.

The school's improvement priorities are based on a sensible range of first-hand evidence and staff have a sound understanding of them. There are suitable arrangements to review progress, identify areas for improvement and take steps to implement them. These include analysing pupils' progress, scrutinising work and observing learning sessions. Staff's skills in taking part in the monitoring and evaluation process and planning the next steps for improvement are developing well. Overall, they know their school well and address a majority of improvements purposefully.

Beneficial sessions are held for staff to organise and implement activities to achieve the agreed priorities. Teachers who are responsible for specific areas of learning and experience develop their understanding of the requirements and share this information suitably with the rest of the staff. Assistants are key members of the school team and contribute regularly to improving pupils' well-being, standards of learning and social skills.

Members of the governing body have sound knowledge of the performance and the effect of the school's procedures on pupils' well-being and progress. Members share responsibilities conscientiously and conduct purposeful visits and activities to evaluate the effect of provision on pupils' standards. They challenge the school on suitable issues sensibly and contribute appropriately to producing clear procedures for improvement. Governors work with staff and pupils to ensure that the school has appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking.

Leaders ensure that expenditure links directly with the school's improvement plans. The acting headteacher and governors make effective use of the school budget to support the curriculum and raise pupils' standards. They link expenditure appropriately to the priorities in the development plan and monitor funding carefully to ensure its best use. Leaders use the pupil development grant sensibly, which has a positive effect on the well-being and progress of individuals and specific groups of pupils.

Another strong feature of the leadership is the purposeful opportunities for all staff to develop professionally. Performance management arrangements for teachers promote staff's professional development effectively and link with the school's priorities. Leaders support teachers to conduct research on aspects of their practices to identify the effect on pupils' progress. There are opportunities for assistants to benefit from professional meetings with leaders to discuss their successes and individual areas for development. The school has an active relationship with local primary schools and the secondary school to develop assessment for learning methods jointly and share practice regarding the effectiveness of language refresher courses, for example.

There is a strong relationship between the school and parents. Staff communicate with them effectively to ensure they are aware of day-to-day events. As a result of all of these positive aspects, a healthy culture of co-operation is promoted which, in turn, contributes significantly to the school's welcoming and warm ethos.

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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