



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

A report on

**Ysgol G.G. Caerffili
Heol Parcyfelin
Caerffili
CF83 3AH**

Date of inspection: February 2022

by

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

About Ysgol G.G. Caerffili

6762282 YSGOL GYMRAEG CAERFFILI Context Page (primary)

Name of provider	YSGOL GYMRAEG CAERFFILI
Local authority	Caerphilly
Language of the provider	Welsh Medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	447
Pupils of statutory school age	324
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	68
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 21.3%)</i>	13.5%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 20.6%)</i>	16.7%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	4.9%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	*
Date of headteacher appointment	March 2022
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	08-10-2013
Start date of inspection	28-02-2022
Additional information	

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

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

Overview

Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Caerffili provides valuable experiences for its pupils. Strong leadership and enthusiastic teachers and assistants, support pupils' well-being very effectively. This helps pupils to become conscientious, confident, citizens of Wales.

Staff offer exciting learning experiences that engage pupils' interest and help them to develop the skills they need to access the whole curriculum and learn effectively. As a result, pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and most make good progress during their time at school.

Despite the challenges the school has faced during the pandemic, a sense of community among parents, staff and pupils has meant that it has faced this challenge with resilience. Staff have worked tirelessly in partnership with parents to support pupils throughout the pandemic. This has ensured that most pupils have continued to make progress, particularly in developing their digital skills and oral Welsh skills.

Although the pandemic has slowed preparations for the Curriculum for Wales, the school has a firm foundation to build on its current arrangements. A team of energetic and knowledgeable staff, who are willing to experiment and share ideas, are keen to continue with their preparations. Staff work collaboratively to provide interesting learning experiences for pupils. This is a strength of the school. Leaders ensure that staff benefit from professional learning that has a positive impact on teaching and learning. This, in addition to clear strategic leadership of curriculum development, ensures that there is a clear direction for the school's work in preparing for the future.

Recommendations

R1 Provide more opportunities for pupils to write at length across the curriculum

R2 Strengthen opportunities for pupils to develop as independent learners

What happens next

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

Main evaluation

Learning:

During their time in school, most pupils develop knowledge, understanding and skills that are appropriate for their stage of development and from their starting points. They recall previous learning, acquire information, deepen their understanding, and develop new skills successfully. Pupils use their thinking skills well, for example when competing in chess competitions. They interact with each other effectively when investigating in science activities and problem solving, for example when considering the important features when creating a ship.

Most pupils develop their Welsh and English communication skills successfully and engage and communicate well with adults and other pupils. They listen to each other politely and contribute well when holding discussions about their work. They acquire the Welsh language skilfully from an early age, which enables them to use a good range of vocabulary to extend their conversations. In the nursery and reception classes, many pupils talk about their experiences and share information with increasing confidence. They use words, phrases and simple sentences and express their favourite things. Most speak coherently and contribute to role-play activities by using relevant language. They show a good awareness that some sounds change at the beginning of words. Most pupils in Year 2 and above explain information and ideas by using resources to support them. They are able to organise a conversation so that different audiences are able to follow what is being said, by giving background information and presenting a brief summary of the main points. Across the school, many pupils are keen to use new vocabulary. Despite the challenges they have faced during the pandemic, many pupils' oral skills are continuing to develop consistently and to a high standard.

In the reception classes, many pupils recognise the difference between letters in a range of situations and use context to understand content. Many Year 2 pupils read aloud with increasing confidence and usually understand what they have read. Their reading skills develop quickly and most use a range of techniques to establish meaning. They recall previous learning enthusiastically for example when remembering the content of their story and explain what kind of person the main character is. Most of the school's oldest pupils change their tone of voice and imitate characters when reading fictional books. They read confidently in Welsh and English, respond to a wide variety of texts, and show an understanding of the main ideas, events, and characters. They gather information about a subject from more than one source and use it appropriately to strengthen their written work, for example when writing a letter about global warming.

As pupils move through the school, most of their writing skills develop well. In the reception classes, most copy and write letters, words and simple phrases confidently using chalk or use pictures and symbols to create writing on screen. Across the school, when they are given an opportunity to write at length and in a range of genres, many use highly effective vocabulary and adjectives to enrich their texts. This enriches their writing and in the best examples, pupils use their re-drafting skills to refine and present high quality written work. On the whole, a minority of pupils'

extended writing skills are developing appropriately, but they would benefit from additional experiences to apply these skills in Welsh and English across the curriculum. In a minority of circumstances, too many ready-made worksheets hinder pupils' independence to write freely and choose the best medium to convey their views or complete a task.

Across the school, most pupils' numeracy skills are developing soundly. They apply their numeracy skills successfully across the curriculum. In the reception classes, pupils solve simple problems in a practical situation, which includes simple addition and subtraction to 5. In Year 2, many pupils use a range of numeracy skills when calculating and use mental and written methods confidently. They analyse and present data methodically, for example when creating bar graphs about the clothes that have arrived at the school for the swap shop. As they move through the school, most pupils build well on their number knowledge and use it successfully in areas across the curriculum, for example when measuring the distance of an arrow as part of their work on Seithennyn.

A positive aspect of the pandemic is the rate at which pupils' digital skills have improved further. Saving and sharing work electronically has become an essential part of their lives, and most pupils now collate information confidently on different systems. Across the school, pupils' digital production skills are a strength, for example when creating an animation about St David's Day. Many develop their ability to combine multimedia approaches in increasingly difficult ways. As a result, in line with their stage and ability, many create a combination of text, images, graphics, sound, video and animations to provide an effective presentation about their class work. Pupils are becoming increasingly confident when working together electronically to complete pieces of work or to receive and submit tasks. Year 6 pupils present their work to the teacher by considering the response electronically before improving and refining their work further. In the best examples, pupils give more detailed consideration to the audience and the purpose of the digital content in question.

Well-being and attitudes to learning:
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Pupils' well-being and attitudes to learning are one of the school's obvious strengths. Pupils feel safe, happy and valued. They trust the staff and are aware of who they can approach if they have any concerns. Many speak proudly about the opportunities that staff give them.. Most pupils know strategies for keeping themselves safe, including when working online.

As a result of the eco council's survey of healthy lunchboxes and devising a rewards method for making healthy choices, nearly all pupils understand the advantages of eating and drinking healthily. Pupils are aware of the importance of physical exercise, and many attend a wide range of extra-curricular clubs. Many pupils undertake their roles and responsibilities enthusiastically and develop their leadership skills consistently. Although the pandemic's restrictions have disrupted the school councils' ability to meet, they have completed a number of schemes, such as encouraging more pupils to speak Welsh in the community, litter picking and visiting a woodland to build hedgehog houses. Most pupils are enthusiastic about how they can be involved in decisions about improving aspects of school life.

Nearly all pupils treat each other, adults, and visitors politely and respectfully. For example, pupils hold doors open courteously for visitors and greet them politely and with a welcoming smile while walking around the school. This is a particular feature of the qualities of the school's pupils. Most pupils move around the school calmly, in an orderly manner and talk confidently to adults in various situations. They behave consistently well in lessons and on the playground.

Pupils benefit greatly from the school's arrangements for supporting their emotional well-being. As a result of this consistent support, most pupils have gained self-respect and confidence. This is reflected well in the pupils' enthusiasm to complete tasks in the classroom and to work kindly and gently with each other.

Most pupils' understanding of their responsibilities as global, ethical and knowledgeable citizens is developing effectively. Nearly all pupils respect their own rights and the rights of others. They have a strong sense of fairness and equality towards their friends and adults, for example when discussing the roles of men and women in the fire service.

Nearly all pupils have positive working relationships with adults, which supports their understanding of well-being extremely positively. Nearly all pupils have positive attitudes to learning and work energetically to complete their activities. They work together diligently in pairs and groups, and are considerate when listening to other pupils' views, and share their thoughts and ideas freely and confidently. Most pupils show perseverance when facing challenges and investigate their own solutions before seeking support from staff.

Following the pandemic, inspectors do not report on pupil attendance rates during the 2021-2022 academic year. Instead, the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance is reported on as part of Inspection Area 4.

Teaching and learning experiences:

The school's staff work together enthusiastically and passionately to immerse pupils in the Welsh language from the beginning of their time at the school. Most teachers model language masterfully, show enthusiasm towards the language and expect high expectations for pupils' standards of oracy. This reinforces the school motto, 'Hawl plentyn ei iaith' ('A child has a right to their language').

Leaders and teachers have worked successfully with nearby schools to create a language scheme that develops pupils' language skills constructively and consistently. This meets the needs of most pupils from all linguistic backgrounds and enriches their language successfully. Assistants have a good understanding of their roles in implementing the scheme and their enthusiasm towards their responsibilities is clear. Their understanding of how to support pupils and move them to the next stage of their educational development is sound. The school has structured its support for learning Welsh highly effectively by ensuring that teachers support groups of pupils who need further support and more able pupils successfully, while assistants work with other groups of pupils. As a result, most pupils attain very high standards in their Welsh oral skills from a very early age.

Teachers provide experiences that support pupils to apply their skills in interesting contexts both inside and outside the school. Leaders have made a significant investment in equipment and resources to create an outdoor area of a high standard. Although many pupils benefit from rich opportunities to use the area, teachers have not yet developed the practice of facilitating this area as an integral part of the learning environment following the pandemic's restrictions. Teachers organise rich opportunities for pupils, for example by visiting the Hay on Wye Literature Festival and providing sports and modern languages clubs, which are currently suspended.

Through purposeful planning, teachers and assistants succeed in providing an appropriate challenge for the full range of pupils' abilities. Teaching is rich with interesting learning experiences that support pupils to be ambitious and confident. Teachers work together closely to ensure consistency and progression across the different groups. This is a strong feature of provision and provides newly qualified staff with supportive assistance. Teachers provide interesting learning experiences that develop pupils' literacy, numeracy and digital competence skills successfully. Recent work to enable pupils to choose their theme, for example 'Calon Lân' this term, provides opportunities for pupils to make connections in their learning by combining and applying different experiences, knowledge and skills.

Teaching practices both inside and outside the classroom engage most pupils' interest effectively. Focused activities successfully develop pupils linguistic and social skills, with content that sparks and enthuses their learning. However, teachers do not always provide activities that promote independent skills to support pupils to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills consistently enough across the curriculum.

Arrangements for assessing pupils on entry to the school are effective. Teachers use a combination of ready-made support programmes, and some that have been produced internally, effectively to measure pupils' progress and set end of stage targets. Most teachers use this information to identify individuals who need support, but also to provide support that corresponds to the learning needs of groups of pupils, set individual targets and share information with parents. As a result, nearly all teachers have a sound understanding of pupils' progress and plan meaningfully to meet all pupils' learning needs..

Care, support and guidance:

The school provides a caring, supportive, and welcoming environment where all pupils take pride in being a valued member of the school family.

Staff have a sound and insightful knowledge of pupils' needs and, as a result, support arrangements are made at an early stage to meet their individual needs. Knowledgeable staff members introduce a purposeful range of effective programmes, such as reading and mathematics support programmes, to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of groups of pupils. The school's arrangements for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are robust. As a result, pupils receive comprehensive support that supports them successfully to make progress in their skills.

Provision for pupils with additional learning needs is a strong feature. All pupils with additional learning needs have an individual education plan, which includes specific targets that staff review with parents regularly. Effective links with a range of external

agencies, such as the speech and language service, provide specialist and beneficial support for pupils.

Staff provide excellent support for pupils' well-being through an emotional literacy support programme and nurture clubs under the supervision of highly effective staff. The strengths of these support programmes are recognised by specialists at the Gwent counselling service, who have already shared the school's best practice with other health and education providers.

Through highly effective co-operation, the school informs parents successfully about their child's progress. During the lockdown periods, parents received useful information about the content of the curriculum, which included guidance on how to support their child by reading with them at home. As a result of this support, this has promoted reading skills with parents and their child successfully.

The school embeds personal and social education activities successfully across the curriculum and in the school's day-to-day life. Staff ensure that pupils develop their social skills and cultural knowledge effectively, for example through visits to plant trees and intergenerational co-operation with a group of elderly people.

Staff support pupils to develop positive attitudes towards differences and diversity skilfully. For example, pupils are given valuable opportunities to develop their understanding of moral, social, and cultural issues through learning activities and assemblies on Rosa Parks, which encourage them to understand and respect diversity. The whole school has an influential approach towards managing pupils' behaviour and establishing an anti-bullying culture.

Pupils are given numerous and valuable opportunities to develop their knowledge of the importance of behaving like active citizens and shouldering responsibilities sensibly. The pandemic has disrupted the ability of pupil voice groups and councils to have a specific effect on the school's procedures. However, teachers support pupils regularly to develop their leadership skills both inside and outside the school, for example by encouraging the use of Welsh further in the local community. Members of the eco council also raise their friends' awareness of the importance of recycling skilfully, and digital leaders promote online safety successfully.

The school forges links with the community effectively, for example by members of the community providing modern languages clubs for pupils. Staff are working together diligently to resume a wide range of extra-curricular activities. In addition to the various sports activities, the school provides activities that support pupils to develop their basic skills, such as numeracy, reading and digital technology.

Leaders and teachers monitor pupils' attendance through robust arrangement by working closely with parents and external agencies, for example by promoting pupils' engagement with their teachers during the pandemic. The school has an appropriate culture and approaches to pupils' safety and well-being, and the school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

Leadership and management:

The headteacher and other senior leaders succeed in providing a clear and strong sense of direction for the school. The vision of developing healthy and confident pupils in a happy and welcoming community is shared successfully. Leaders have high expectations of themselves, staff, and pupils and, as a result, a caring, hard-working and Welsh ethos permeates all of the school's activities. Their continuous attention to developing the professional skills of all members of staff is a notable element of the school's work.

All members of staff understand their responsibilities well. Staff teams focus on specific aspects of provision highly effectively. This means that members of staff can share their expertise across a range of aspects of teaching and learning across the school, work together on new ideas and support others efficiently. The school provides valuable opportunities for individuals to develop professionally and to lead specific aspects of work within the school and more widely. For example, staff arrangements for implementing effective teaching and learning techniques for drilling language and developing pupils' literacy skills in Welsh and English have been shared across the region. As a result, the school's teachers support other schools in the region to develop their literacy provision. Another example of the highly effective development of the school's workforce is the role of the higher-level teaching assistants, A few assistants gain qualifications to train prospective higher-level teaching assistants , subsequently training and assessing higher-level teaching assistants applicants on behalf of the regional consortium. This broadens their personal professional opportunities and ensures that the school's assistants receive the latest training and information about the role which, in turn, develops pupils' experiences further.

Staff at all levels contribute to professional learning sessions regularly and share their expertise successfully. They visit each other's classes as learning triads, when circumstances allow, in order to observe, reflect and refine their teaching methods. This leads to robust consistency in teaching methods across the school.

Ysgol Gymraeg Caerffili is part of the Cardiff Metropolitan University education partnership and is a lead school for initial teacher training. This means that the school's staff are responsible for mentoring a significant number of students each year. This reinforces the positive attitudes of all staff towards professional learning. They work together effectively to guide students to research areas that deepen their understanding of research outcomes in relation to teaching and learning.

Leaders' self-evaluation arrangements are thorough, effective and consider first-hand evidence and staff views regularly as they evaluate the school's performance. Although a number of the school's monitoring activities have needed to be adapted as a result of the pandemic, monitoring reports are detailed and identify aspects for improvement correctly. This enables leaders to put steps in place to address relevant issues. Information from the monitoring arrangements is used successfully to set clear priorities for improvement. Priorities focus firmly on raising standards of well-being and progress in pupils' skills and preparing effectively for the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales and the additional learning needs Act.

Leaders have a good understanding of national and local priorities. They support teachers to ensure that pupils' literacy, numeracy, and digital skills are taught successfully. This means that most pupils make strong progress in developing skills by the end of their time at the school. Leaders operate purposefully to reduce the effects of poverty on pupils' progress, particularly as the number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals increased during the pandemic. They use funding purposefully to target pupils effectively. They also prioritised preparing and implementing the Curriculum for Wales. Following occasional but frequent staff illness during the pandemic, the school's ability to achieve this priority has been hampered. A senior member of staff leads on developing the new curriculum within the school skilfully and trials planning and activities successfully.

Members of the governing body are highly supportive of the school and know it well. They receive useful information from the headteacher and staff about the school's work. For example, they have a sound understanding of the nature of the teaching and support that teachers provided for parents and their families during the lockdown periods, including the effect of the pandemic on pupils' achievement and progress.

The school has appropriate arrangements to promote eating and drinking healthily.

The headteacher manages funding prudently. Staff activities to support the work of the regional consortium, and their partnership with the university, ensure a significant income for the school. Leaders make sensible use of this additional funding, in addition to various purposeful grants, to have a positive effect on improving pupils' skills. For example, the school employs additional assistants to lead support programmes and support pupils in the classroom. They also hold educational activities outside school hours to support pupils' basic skills successfully. Leaders ensure that the school has plenty of good quality resources that meet pupils' needs.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carers and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read 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 classes, including learning support groups 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 and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- 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 (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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