



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

A report on

**Ysgol Gymraeg Aberystwyth
Plascrug Avenue
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY23 1HL**

Date of inspection: November 2016

by

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

Summary

All of the school's life and work is based on three agreed aims for its pupils and staff, namely pride in their Welshness, mutual respect and doing their very best. These aims permeate all of its activities strongly. During their time at the school, nearly all pupils make very strong progress. They perform at levels that at least correspond to those that are expected, and over half exceed this consistently. The pupil's voice is important and is respected throughout the school. As a result, standards of wellbeing and nearly all pupils' attitudes towards learning are strong. The quality of teaching and learning experiences is very high, and support to ensure pupils' wellbeing is an exceptional feature. The school is led very effectively by a confident and creative headteacher, and the senior management team support him conscientiously, and ensure that the school provides education that is consistently of a very high quality and is based on maintaining and raising standards.

Recommendations

R1 Ensure that provision to develop pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills builds more systematically on those that they have already acquired

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will maintain the high standards and quality of provision and address the recommendation.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a written case study describing the best practice that was seen during the inspection.

Main findings

1: Standards

Excellent

On entry to the school, most pupils have skills that at least correspond with what is expected for their age. During their time there, nearly all pupils make robust and consistent progress, which at least correspond to what is expected, while over half make progress that exceeds this. Nearly all pupils who come from non-Welsh speaking homes acquire very good Welsh communication skills at an early stage.

Nearly all pupils have very robust speaking and listening skills. Nearly all pupils listen attentively to adults and each other, and respond to instructions and questions confidently, using extended and interesting sentences in Welsh. They speak maturely in a variety of situations from an early age and use increasingly complex vocabulary and syntax as they gain confidence. Most pupils explain what they are doing in tasks very clearly and confidently. Many use local dialect completely naturally when speaking with others. Most pupils' spoken English skills in key stage 2 are skilful and very mature.

Nearly all pupils' reading skills are developing successfully. Most pupils in the Foundation Phase read a wide range of different texts in Welsh with increasing accuracy. They use an effective range of phonic strategies confidently to build unfamiliar words when necessary. They discuss the content of their books very maturely and give sensible reasons for their choices. Most pupils in key stage 2 read very intelligently and maturely in both languages, and practice their higher order reading skills regularly and independently to gather information from different sources.

One of the school's notable strengths is the way in which most pupils write to a very high standard for different purposes in a wide range of subjects and contexts. Most pupils write interesting pieces with increasing accuracy in Welsh. There are good examples among pupils in the Foundation Phase which include a miner's diary and an interview with Winnie the Witch, and from key stage 2 a portrayal of Tim Boswel, when studying the novel 'Tân ar y Comin', and a factual report on their visit to the Wool Museum. Most pupils punctuate and spell correctly and present their work neatly.

Pupils' numeracy skills are extremely robust. Nearly all pupils are able to solve number problems confidently and recall number facts quickly, by applying what they have learnt previously confidently in new situations. Notable examples are the confident way in which pupils in the Foundation Phase calculate the money and change that is needed when playing in the sports shop, and older pupils in key stage 2 solving numerical problems when arranging a trip to Dublin. A majority have a sound understanding of multiplication and place value, and they are able to use data with increasing accuracy and present it in different forms, such as graphs or tables. A majority of older pupils in key stage 2 understand that they need to use different graphs to convey information in a wide range of subjects across the curriculum. A notable example is a line graph to denote the link between a person's height and their lung capacity in science.

Most pupils' ICT skills are developing robustly and they use them confidently across the curriculum. Most pupils' ICT skills in the Foundation Phase are very secure, considering their age. Most pupils across the school use word processing programs, produce digital presentations, use 'QR' codes, and research on the internet with increasing confidence. By the end of key stage 2, many also create and interrogate databases maturely, and a few create multimedia presentations fairly effectively to reinforce their work in other areas. They use information from spreadsheets effectively to create graphs.

Nearly all pupils with additional learning needs make robust and consistent progress against their personal targets.

As the number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is so small, it is not reliable to compare their performance with that of the remainder. However, nearly all have made very good progress over the last four years.

There is no notable pattern of difference between the performance of boys and girls over the last four years.

The school's performance at the end of the Foundation Phase and key stage 2 has been consistently and robustly high over the last four years in nearly all quality indicators. Exceptions are pupils who do not reach at least the expected level.

There has been an upward trend in assessment results at the end of the Foundation Phase at the expected outcome over the last four years. The school's performance has usually placed it in the upper 50% or the top 25% of similar schools for mathematical development and Welsh literacy. At the higher outcome, performance has been above average consistently in literacy and mathematical development.

The school's performance at the end of key stage 2 has usually placed the school in the upper 50% in both languages and mathematics. Although approximately 98% of pupils attain at least the expected level consistently in science, the school has been placed in the lower 50%. At the higher levels, the school has performed consistently high and generally above average in all core subjects in comparison with similar schools.

A very few pupils achieved two levels higher than the expected level in all indicators in both key stages in 2016.

2: Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Excellent
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Standards of wellbeing and nearly all pupils' attitudes towards learning are extremely strong. Nearly all pupils take advantage of the beneficial opportunities that they are given to express their opinion about important aspects of the school's work, and to contribute to their own wellbeing and that of their peers very effectively. They do so through the variety of effective children's committees, which include the school council, keeping healthy committee and the anti-bullying committee. These committees make a valuable contribution to pupils' understanding of the different aspects of their personal and social skills. Staff transfer further responsibility to older

pupils to lead important aspects of the school's work by expressing an opinion on the content of policies that are relevant to them, and by leading fitness workshops for younger pupils. Pupils are grateful that leaders trust them, take their ideas seriously and often act on their recommendations. Pupils support the activities of the humanitarian committee regularly to raise money for a number of charities. This has a positive effect on their awareness of the needs of others in their community and the wider world.

Nearly all pupils have a mature understanding of the importance of keeping healthy by eating and drinking sensibly and participating in physical activities. Pupils appreciate the wide range of physical activities that are available, and many attend them regularly and compete in friendly games with teams from nearby schools. This contributes very positively to the development of their fitness and social skills.

Nearly all pupils enjoy the school's life and work and feel safe there. Nearly all pupils are very well-behaved and treat each other, staff and visitors with respect. This is an excellent feature of the school's life, and contributes significantly to the very effective learning environment. Most pupils are very caring towards each other and treat others with respect in lessons and during playtime. They take regular advantage of the valuable opportunities that are available to them to express their opinion about what they would like to learn at the beginning of each theme, and offer their own learning pathways.

Nearly all pupils are enthusiastic and work diligently for extended periods of time when completing their activities. They support each other's learning very effectively in lessons, and develop to become confident and independent learners. Most pupils have a sound understanding of what they need to do in order to improve their work.

Attendance rates over the last four years have been very high and have placed the school in the top 25% consistently in comparison with similar schools.

3: Teaching and learning experiences	Excellent
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The quality of teaching is excellent across the school. Teachers plan skilfully and make effective use of a variety of rich teaching methods and interesting learning experiences to engage nearly all pupils' interest successfully.

One of the strong features of the school is the natural way in which staff provide a wide, balanced and rich curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils. It is based on interesting and imaginative themes and learning experiences which again engage their interest well and develop their skills and curiosity towards learning skilfully. This strengthens their commitment to their work and fosters their awareness of their culture very successfully. A notable example of this is the stimulating projects that develop pupils' skills through art, dance and music activities in a Welsh context.

The school ensures that developing pupils' literacy and numeracy is core to its plans. Teachers plan rich and creative learning experiences for pupils to develop these skills systematically, and based on their previous experiences. This leads to effective opportunities for pupils to apply them across the curriculum. A notable example is

the plan to launch a balloon into space, which has provided cross-curricular opportunities to develop pupils' skills to a very high standard. Pupils are also given good opportunities to use their ICT skills across the curriculum. However, staff do not always ensure that plans to develop these skills build systematically enough on those that they have already acquired.

In the Foundation Phase, staff foster pupils' independence and develop their skills effectively by providing them with stimulating and interesting experiences. Staff have a sound understanding of the principles of this phase, and they motivate pupils to discover and learn independently from the beginning. Teachers in key stage 2 build on this firm foundation effectively by encouraging pupils to work independently and apply their skills to challenging tasks. Tasks and challenges are of a very high standard and ignite nearly all pupils' enthusiasm and motivation successfully.

The best features of teaching, which are evident in all classes, are the high expectations of all staff, and the effective way in which teachers share clear objectives with pupils. They often provide opportunities for pupils to devise their own success criteria. This encourages pupils to consider their own performance, and refine it where necessary, as they work through their tasks. Teachers' presentations are lively and challenge nearly all pupils to achieve as well as they can. Teachers question skilfully to extend pupils' understanding and knowledge very successfully. Nearly all teachers model polished language skilfully and take advantage of valuable opportunities to improve pupils' oral skills. By forging a very effective working relationship with pupils, staff create an extremely supportive and stimulating learning environment. This contributes particularly effectively to developing pupils' independent learning skills.

Teachers use assessment procedures very effectively to support pupils. They offer useful oral feedback and, where appropriate, valuable written feedback that focuses well on developing their skills. Across the school, pupils are given valuable opportunities to assess their own performance and that of their peers. As a result, they have a sound understanding of what they need to achieve in order to create work of a high standard.

Teachers assess correctly and analyse outcomes effectively to guide their plans for the future. This is a very strong element of the school's work.

4: Care, support and guidance	Excellent
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The school has an extremely effective procedure to track and monitor pupils' progress and wellbeing. The procedure is easy for teachers to use, and enables them to plan and provide support to address the needs of individuals and specific groups of pupils well. Teachers identify pupils' educational, emotional and social needs at an early stage and provide them with effective intervention programmes. Assistants work diligently under the guidance of teachers or the additional learning needs co-ordinator in order to implement a wide range of intervention programmes of a very high standard. This enables these pupils to make sound and consistent progress. All pupils with additional learning needs have an education plan that includes measurable and challenging targets. These plans are reviewed regularly

with pupils and their parents, and adapted as necessary. A particular feature of the school's work is its successful commitment to ensuring that pupils make enough progress so that they do not need to continue to receive interventions for extended periods of time.

The school provides comprehensive plans to develop its pupils' personal and social education, which fosters aspects such care and equality, and promotes the school's aims very effectively. Teachers arrange rich educational visits and invite interesting visitors to the school, which contribute robustly towards pupils' understanding of the importance of fostering wide and varied social attitudes.

The school encourages pupils to eat and drink healthy and stay healthy effectively by providing them with a wide variety of physical activities. Its arrangements for responding to pupils' emotional needs are very successful and have a positive effect on them. The additional learning needs co-ordinator provides effective and sensitive sessions for vulnerable pupils to discuss their feelings at difficult times, in order to raise their confidence and ensure that they are ready to learn.

The school provides skilfully to develop pupils' spiritual and cultural attitudes. Staff arrange rich opportunities for them to reflect in collective worship sessions, which are often based on stories from the Bible or themes such as anti-bullying week, where they are given opportunities to appreciate and celebrate the differences between themselves and their peers. As a result, pupils have a sound understanding of religious and moral issues, and issues that are happening in the wider world. The school offers very effective opportunities to promote pupils' social and moral skills by using various strategies, which often include the children's committees. These have a very positive effect on pupils' ability to work together and respect each other's views in an inclusive and caring environment. It encourages them to grow into active citizens who are ready to lead important elements within their community.

The school provides an excellent variety of opportunities for pupils to perform at school, in the local community and beyond, and develop their self-confidence, their pride in themselves and their ability to work with others. Examples include sports and musical activities and Urdd competitions.

The school building and grounds are clean and tidy. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and are not a cause for concern.

5: Leadership and management	Excellent
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The headteacher leads the school confidently, intelligently and creatively. The deputy headteacher and members of the senior management team support him successfully and ensure that staff provide education of a very high quality and are strongly committed to maintaining and raising standards. The headteacher has a robust vision to promote Welshness, foster respect and encourage pupils and staff to do their very best. He conveys this vision very successfully, and it is core to all of the school's activities. As a result, leaders, staff and governors have very high expectations of themselves, each other and pupils' standards of achievement.

All members of staff are responsible for a specific aspect of the school's work, and they contribute effectively towards maintaining consistently high standards in terms of teaching and pupils' achievement. Leaders make effective use of performance data analyses to refine provision and plan staff training. A good example of this is the effective way in which the school has enriched provision for more able pupils. This has led to raising standards at the higher outcome and higher level.

Members of the governing body have a rigorous knowledge of the school's performance by playing a prominent part in its monitoring, self-evaluation and strategic planning processes. By working effectively with leaders, observing lessons and scrutinising books, they have a sound awareness of the standards of teaching and learning. This enables them to hold the school to account and set a clear strategic direction to develop the school as an effective learning community.

The school's improvement procedures are a very natural and effective part of its work, and have led to maintaining and raising standards consistently since the last inspection. The self-evaluation report highlights the features and areas for improvement precisely and accurately. It is established firmly on the findings of the effective monitoring procedure, which is based on pupils' progress and attainment and the quality of provision. Priorities in the improvement plan are based directly on the outcomes of the self-evaluation procedure, and focus firmly on maintaining and raising standards. Leaders monitor progress carefully and present a rigorous report in relation to the priorities in the previous plan regularly. This ensures that the school continues to improve every year.

One of the strongest features of the school's leadership is the rich opportunities that are provided for staff to develop professionally. It has sound performance management procedures that enrich the staff's professional development successfully and have a positive effect on standards. A notable example of these activities is the 'Rhannu Dysg' programme, which enables teachers to observe each other and work together in fours to refine specific aspects of their teaching practices. Leaders evaluate the effectiveness of this in detail and adapt their practices regularly. Through its responsibility as a pioneer school, it shares good practice in teaching and learning with trainees from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and other schools successfully.

Leaders use resources efficiently to enrich the curriculum and raise pupils' standards in all areas; for example, they use the Pupil Deprivation Grant prudently to raise the standards of the very few pupils who are eligible to receive it. Expenditure is linked appropriately with priorities in the improvement plan, and funds are monitored carefully in order to ensure the best use of them and to provide high quality teaching.

About the school

Ysgol Gymraeg Aberystwyth is situated on the outskirts of the seaside town of Aberystwyth in Ceredigion. Welsh is the main medium of the school's life and work. There are 401 pupils between 3 and 11 years old on roll, including 54 part-time nursery-age children.

Approximately 2% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is significantly lower than the national percentage. Many pupils speak Welsh at home and a very few are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The school has identified that 23% of pupils have additional learning needs, but very few have a statement of special educational needs.

The headteacher was appointed to his post in 2011, and the school was last inspected in February 2009.

The school is currently a pioneer school and is working with the Welsh Government and other schools to proceed with developments relating to professional learning.

Appendix 1: Summary table of inspection areas

Standards	Excellent
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Excellent
Teaching and learning experiences	Excellent
Care, support and guidance	Excellent
Leadership and management	Excellent

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate, needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory, needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

Appendix 2: Performance data

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Number of pupils on roll	416
Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) - 3 year average	3.9
FSM band	1 (FSM<=8%)

Foundation Phase

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Number of pupils in Year 2 cohort	47	60	47	48
Achieving the Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) (%)	95.7	95.0	95.7	100.0
Benchmark quartile	2	2	2	1
Language, literacy and communication skills - English (LCE)				
Number of pupils in cohort	*	*	*	*
Achieving outcome 5+ (%)	*	*	*	*
Benchmark quartile	*	*	*	*
Achieving outcome 6+ (%)	*	*	*	*
Benchmark quartile	*	*	*	*
Language, literacy and communication skills - Welsh (LCW)				
Number of pupils in cohort	47	60	47	48
Achieving outcome 5+ (%)	95.7	95.0	95.7	100.0
Benchmark quartile	2	2	3	1
Achieving outcome 6+ (%)	48.9	51.7	53.2	54.2
Benchmark quartile	1	1	1	1
Mathematical development (MDT)				
Number of pupils in cohort	47	60	47	48
Achieving outcome 5+ (%)	97.9	98.3	97.9	100.0
Benchmark quartile	2	2	2	1
Achieving outcome 6+ (%)	38.3	50.0	51.1	54.2
Benchmark quartile	2	1	2	2
Personal and social development, wellbeing and cultural diversity (PSD)				
Number of pupils in cohort	47	60	47	48
Achieving outcome 5+ (%)	100.0	100.0	97.9	100.0
Benchmark quartile	1	1	3	1
Achieving outcome 6+ (%)	55.3	65.0	83.0	79.2
Benchmark quartile	3	3	2	2

The Foundation Phase indicator (FPI) represents the percentage of pupils achieving outcome 5 or above in PSD, LCE/LCW, and MDT in combination.

* This item may disclose information on individuals, or it is not sufficiently robust for publication, not applicable or is otherwise unavailable.

The benchmark quartile compares the performance of one school against others who have similar levels of pupils with free school meals (FSM). FSM is used as a proxy of social deprivation in schools. This allows a comparison of the performance of a school against others who are in the same FSM category, and who might therefore have a similar intake of pupils from deprived backgrounds.

A school in benchmark quartile 1 is in the highest performing 25% of schools with similar levels of free school meals to this school. Therefore, the school's attainment levels are higher than many other schools with similar levels of pupils from deprived backgrounds. A school in benchmark quartile 4 is in the lowest performing 25% of schools with similar levels of free school meals to this school. Therefore, the school's attainment levels are lower than many other schools with similar levels of pupils from deprived backgrounds.

A report on Ysgol Gymraeg Aberystwyth
November 2016

6672299 - YR YSGOL GYMUNEDOL GYMRAEG

Number of pupils on roll	416
Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) - 3 year average	3.9
FSM band	1 (FSM<=8%)

Key stage 2

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Number of pupils in Year 6 cohort	44	41	45	52
Achieving the core subject indicator (CSI) (%)	97.7	97.6	95.6	96.2
Benchmark quartile	2	2	3	3
English				
Number of pupils in cohort	44	41	45	52
Achieving level 4+ (%)	97.7	97.6	95.6	98.1
Benchmark quartile	2	2	3	2
Achieving level 5+ (%)	52.3	56.1	60.0	53.8
Benchmark quartile	2	2	2	2
Welsh first language				
Number of pupils in cohort	44	41	45	52
Achieving level 4+ (%)	97.7	97.6	95.6	98.1
Benchmark quartile	2	2	3	2
Achieving level 5+ (%)	43.2	53.7	57.8	50.0
Benchmark quartile	2	1	1	2
Mathematics				
Number of pupils in cohort	44	41	45	52
Achieving level 4+ (%)	97.7	97.6	95.6	96.2
Benchmark quartile	2	2	3	3
Achieving level 5+ (%)	47.7	43.9	57.8	51.9
Benchmark quartile	2	3	2	3
Science				
Number of pupils in cohort	44	41	45	52
Achieving level 4+ (%)	97.7	97.6	97.8	98.1
Benchmark quartile	3	3	3	3
Achieving level 5+ (%)	50.0	43.9	62.2	67.3
Benchmark quartile	2	3	2	1

The core subject indicator (CSI) represents the percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above in English or Welsh (first language), mathematics and science in combination.

* This item may disclose information on individuals, or it is not sufficiently robust for publication, not applicable or is otherwise unavailable.

The benchmark quartile compares the performance of one school against others who have similar levels of pupils with free school meals (FSM). FSM is used as a proxy of social deprivation in schools. This allows a comparison of the performance of a school against others who are in the same FSM category, and who might therefore have a similar intake of pupils from deprived backgrounds.

A school in benchmark quartile 1 is in the highest performing 25% of schools with similar levels of free school meals to this school. Therefore, the school's attainment levels are higher than many other schools with similar levels of pupils from deprived backgrounds. A school in benchmark quartile 4 is in the lowest performing 25% of schools with similar levels of free school meals to this school. Therefore, the school's attainment levels are lower than many other schools with similar levels of pupils from deprived backgrounds.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.

<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/index.html?lang=eng>

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

We used this inspection to pilot developments to the common inspection framework, the inspection process and the inspection report format. We will review these arrangements and make any changes required before introducing them nationally in September 2017.

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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